SWORD SKILLS

Movements and Cutting Patterns for the Blade Fighter

By Chuck Callaway

Sword Skills

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The martial arts and self-defense involve the use of fighting skills and techniques designed to cause injury to an attacker. The practice and use of these skills can be dangerous and physically demanding. The improper use of any weapon or fighting technique could result in both criminal and civil action against the person responsible. Readers should be aware of the laws in their place of residency before practicing any of the techniques described in this book. The information provided in this book is for informational and entertainment purposes only. **The author and publisher are not responsible and assume no liability for any injury, damage, or legal proceedings that might result from the practice, use, or misuse, of the information contained in this book.** One should always consult a physician before engaging in any physical activity. Proceed at your own risk.

Contents

Introduction
Key Concepts
Sword Movements
Beyond the Basic Movements
Cutting Patterns
Conclusion
About the Author

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the great warriors of the past who courageously
faced their enemies and clashed steel on the battlefield. Warriors who knew
that every time they lifted
their blade it was truly a matter of life or death.

“For no one-no one in this world can you trust.
Not men, not women, not beasts. [Points to sword]
This you can trust!”

-Conan’s father
Conan the Barbarian

Introduction

I have always had a fascination with the sword. I remember as a young boy using my father's metal grinder to put a sharp edge on a piece of steel I found in our barn. I then wrapped the handle with leather strips to form a crude sword. I carried my homemade sword around with me on many adventures that included snake hunting and looking for large rats that were abundant along the railroad tracks at the granary near my home. Although I swung my homemade sword with the rage of a Viking, the giant rats usually escaped the wrath of my blade unharmed.

As I grew older, my thirst for sword knowledge grew as well. I read every book I could find on sword fighting and was very intrigued by the Japanese katana. Eventually I bought a cheap samurai sword replica at a local pawn shop. It was dull so I quickly put my father's metal grinder back to use and gave it a sharpened edge. Although I had not yet received any formal sword training at this point in my life, I read many books on the subject and practiced drawing and cutting daily. As a kid growing up in the country there was never a shortage of sword targets to practice on. I chopped down many corn stalks and milk weeds with that sword.

My quest for knowledge soon expanded to European sword fighting methods. In 1982, the movie *Conan the Barbarian* was released, and I probably watched it over a hundred times and studied closely the sword movements contained in the movie's battle scenes. It was around this time that I read a magazine article that talked about how a Japanese sword master had trained Arnold Schwarzenegger for the movie. I remember thinking at the time that it was odd that Japanese katana techniques would be used to represent the broad sword movements employed by Conan. Then the light bulb went off in my head and I realized that regardless of the sword style and differences in techniques, the underlining principles are really the same. There are only so many ways to slash and stab an adversary with the sword.

In the late seventies I began my formal training in the martial arts and over the last forty-two years I have studied several different sword fighting methods including the Aikido bokken, various Filipino martial arts systems, and European fencing. My training and continued studies have re-enforced my belief that all sword fighting systems contain more similarities than differences.

Most of the major differences between the sword arts are a result of adaptations that have been made due to the size and weight of the weapon or the type of clothing and protective armor worn by the practitioners. The true key to proficiency with the sword is knowledge and understanding of the basic underlying principles of bladed combat. Once these principles are understood, they can be effectively applied regardless of the type of weapon, or the style that is being used.

In the more than four decades that I have studied martial arts I have found that certain movements and patterns with the sword are universal and can be applied equally to any type of weapon. These same movements and principles can easily be adapted from a short one-handed sword to a long two-handed blade with only slight modifications by the practitioner.

In my own practice sessions, I would find myself using a technique I was taught in Arnis with my katana or flowing into a fencing movement while training with a machete. Eventually my training with the sword evolved to the point where I was focusing more on core movements and not thinking in terms of specific types of swords or stylistic differences. These core movements became the common denominator that linked all of my sword practice together into one efficient system of blade combat.

My goal in writing this book is to share with you some of the core movements and cutting patterns I have used over the years. I believe these movements and patterns when seriously studied will enhance your sword fighting skills. Although these patterns and movements are simple, they are based on practical combat techniques and have real fighting applications that we will explore as well. Once the movements and patterns are learned, they can be combined into almost limitless combinations of techniques. So, without further ado, grab your sword and let's get started!

Chuck Callaway

July 2021

Key Concepts

This book is not intended to teach you a certain style or form of sword fighting but rather to provide you with core movements and cutting patterns that I have used extensively over the years to enhance my own personal sword fighting system. Because of this, I will assume that you have at least a basic familiarity with some type of sword combat method.

Based on this assumption, this book will not cover basic sword topics such as footwork, guards, targets, or tactics, unless they are directly related to the descriptions of the movements or cutting patterns. If you do not currently study some form of combat with the blade, there are many great books on specific styles of sword fighting available.

This book should be thought of as a resource of practical movements and techniques that will supplement any system. In fact, I will go so far as to say that if you master the concepts in this book, they will liberate you from your current style and give you the skills necessary to give any sword practitioner a run for their money in a sparring match.

Even though this book is not intended to be a standard sword instructional manual, there are some key concepts that we need to discuss before we get started with learning the core movements and cutting patterns. To get the best results from your training, you should incorporate all of these concepts into your daily practice.

Combat Mindset

Every time that you perform the movements and cutting patterns, you must do so with a combat mind set. Don’t just blindly go through the motions and swing your sword around like a mindless zombie. Instead, pay close attention to each movement and recognize the practical application of what you are doing. Stay relaxed and focused but execute each movement with power speed, and precision as if you were engaging an actual opponent in combat. Although the movements and cutting patterns will look impressive when executed in a fluid manner, they are not intended to be a dance. They are combat movements and must be practiced with a mindset that you are actually fighting an enemy.

Visualization

Visualization is an extremely important component of training that goes hand in hand with the combat mindset. As you perform the movements and cutting patterns, it is essential to visualize yourself executing the techniques against an opponent who is attacking and moving against you. Practice using your mind's eye to clearly see the imaginary opponent's limbs, sword, and target areas as you move. By using visualization, you take the drills and patterns to a new level and engrain in your subconscious the fact that they are fighting techniques with actual combat applications.

Think Outside of the Box

When it comes to the movements and cutting patterns, there are no hard and fast rules. Once you learn the core movements and have them down, feel free to experiment and change them to suit your own personal needs. Add your own footwork and mix the movements and patterns with other techniques that you have learned. Adapt the movements to highlight the strengths and avoid the weaknesses for your weapon of choice. For example, if your blade is more suitable for slashing rather than thrusting attacks, focus on the slashing movements in the drills and patterns. Don't ignore the thrusting techniques all together but learn to make slight modifications to your movements that will make your weaker strikes more effective.

Beyond the Blade

Realize that the movements and cutting patterns have much more to offer than just improving your sword skills. Practicing these exercises will improve your overall hand and eye coordination which will benefit other aspects of your martial arts training. Those who have done a lot of training with weapons know that your empty hand skills can drastically improve as a result. Because the weapons move considerably faster than your hands, your eyes become adjusted to the faster speed. This shortens your reaction time by causing normal empty hand movements to seem slower. This is similar to the experience of driving eighty miles an hour on the freeway and then slowing down to forty-five when you exit on a city street. Forty-five miles an hour will seem extremely slow because you have become accustomed to the faster speed.

You should also consider how the patterns and movements can be applied to weapons other than the sword. For example, practice the movements with an umbrella, a walking stick, a rolled-up magazine, or a tire iron. With slight modification, you can even practice these movements and cutting patterns empty handed. You are only limited by your own imagination.

Finally, don't ignore the physical fitness benefits of performing these movements and patterns. If you go through these exercises daily, not only are you ingraining them in your subconscious, but you are also improving your overall health by raising your heart rate and stimulating blood flow. Setting an egg timer for three minutes and free flowing with the sword movements and cutting patterns for a couple of rounds is an excellent work out. The movements are also very effective for clearing your mind, relieving stress, and relaxing the body. I like to practice after a hard day of work to relive stress and unwind.

Flow

A key element to all of the cutting patterns and movements is flow. Flow simply means smooth transitional movement between each technique. This is the ability to seamlessly transition from one technique to another with no break or disruption of movement. Flow also gives you the ability to instantly change from one movement to another mid-stream and quickly adapt to the actions of your opponent. While flow is most often associated with circular movement, linear techniques should also be executed with flow. A thrust or jab with the sword blade should flow directly from or into another attack or defensive movement without interruption.

As you practice the movements and cutting patterns, make sure that you make a conscious effort to eliminate any unnecessary movements or wasted motion. As your skills improve and you start to combine the techniques, you will want to ensure the transition between each movement happens smoothly. By concentrating on flow when you practice, your skills in sparring and self-defense will greatly improve.

One excellent way to improve flow is to shadow spar with music. Different styles and tempos of music will stimulate different types of body movement when you practice. This will naturally improve your ability to flow.

Stay Mobile

In the beginning stages it is ok to practice the cutting patterns and movements in a stationary manner. However, once the techniques have been fully digested, you should add footwork and practice each of them while moving. Ultimately the movements and patterns should be executed with all types of footwork. Below are some examples of various types of footwork you should incorporate into the movements and patterns when you practice.

1) Advancing
2) Retreating
3) Circular movement around the opponent
4) Circular pivot in place as the opponent moves around you
5) Lunging
6) Side stepping/Angling offline
7) Triangular footwork
8) Body pivot left or right

It is important to note that a critical element of sword defense is the ability to move your body off of the opponent's line of attack. Blocks, parries, redirections, and interceptions are only a portion of a solid defensive system. Evasion is equally important if not more important. You must always move your body off of the line of attack whenever you perform any of the movements or patterns.

The above list is just a few examples of footwork you can use when you practice and is by no means a complete list. It is important to experiment with many different types of footwork as you train.

Attack and Defense Are One

This concept can be difficult for some martial artists to grasp. In essence, every movement you perform in the martial arts can be offensive or defensive in nature. In fact, sometimes a movement can be both offensive and defensive at the same time. For example, think of an outside slash with the sword. This movement could be used as an attack to the opponent's head or neck. The outside slash could also be used to parry an opponent's attack. Finally, the outside slash could be used to stop an opponent's attack by cutting his weapon arm. The same movement is an attack in the first example, a defensive technique in the second, and both attack and defense in the third. Learn to look at all of the core movements and cutting patterns as containing all three possibilities.

Practice the Movements with a Partner

After you become familiar with the core movements and cutting patterns and the techniques sink in, expand your practice to include a training partner. This can be done in several ways. First, use a partner to analyze your techniques as you perform the movements and offer positive feedback on where you might need to improve. Second, bring the movements and cutting patterns to life by having your training partner attack you as you defend by using the techniques.

It is important to start slowly and not let the training turn into a sparring session in the beginning stages. Your initial goal is to understand and execute the practical applications of the movements.

At advanced stages of training, you can use the techniques from the movements and cutting patterns in light sparring with proper protective equipment. Eventually, the movements will become part of your subconscious and will reveal themselves automatically during full sparring or in a self-defense situation.

Practice with a Live Blade

I do not recommend practicing the movements and cutting patterns in this book with a sharp or "live" blade in the beginning. The use of a practice sword with a dull edge will be much safer and allow you to focus on the details of the techniques without worrying about accidently cutting yourself or dropping the sword and taking off a toe. You should consider using a metal sword that is dull and has the point blunted. In the early stages your practice sword should closely resemble the real sword that you focus your studies on. For example, if you study saber fighting, then obviously your practice weapon should closely resemble a real saber in size and weight.

It is vital that you train with a practice weapon in the exact same manner you would train with a sharpened blade. Always be cognizant of where the edge of the blade and point would be. If you develop bad habits while training with a practice sword, this could cause injury and be very dangerous when you transition to a live blade. Always treat any sword you handle as if it were a real weapon even if it is a plastic training sword.

Eventually, when all of the movements have been mastered, you will want to transition to a live blade. Go very slow at first and make sure you are executing each movement and cutting pattern perfectly. Maintain awareness of the blade and where the tip and sharp edge is at all times. You should always wear safety goggles and proper clothing when you train with a real blade. One slip could result in serious injury so train responsibly. Understand that sword practice is dangerous, and you train at your own risk. If you can't accept this fact, take up badminton instead and leave bladed weapons alone.

The Type of Sword to Use

With some minor modifications, you can use almost any type of sword to perform the movements and cutting patterns in this book. Obviously, some types of swords will lend themselves better to the overall principles of the techniques. For example, I normally practice with a Russian style saber called a Shashka because of its slashing and thrusting capabilities. I also like to train with a machete or Filipino bolo that are more commonly used for slashing attacks. However, on occasion I will train with a Japanese style katana, a Chinese straight sword, and even an old-style rapier.

I typically use the same movements and cutting patterns regardless of the weapon I choose to train with. The key is knowing how to adapt the movements and patterns to highlight the strengths of each particular type of sword. For example, when training with a rapier, I will obviously focus more on thrusting techniques and even adapt some of the slashing techniques to favor the rapier style by tightening up the broad movements. When training with the machete, I will focus more on checking and trapping movements with my live hand and close-range footwork. The basic principles of the movements and cutting patterns stay the same regardless of the type of sword I am using.

Throughout this book I will mention some of the ways each technique or pattern can be adapted to account for the type of sword being used. Remember that the ultimate goal is to develop a style that can be readily adapted to any bladed weapon you pick up from a bowie knife to a light saber. The below photographs show a few of my personal training swords.

Three Ways to Practice the Movements and Patterns

As we get into the movements and cutting patterns, you should understand that you can practice each one basically three different ways. Initially you may choose to focus on the method that best reflects your current style of sword fighting and the weapon you use. Later, you should incorporate all three methods regardless of the type of sword you use, or the style of blade combat you study. The three methods are as follows.

1) One-Handed
2) One-Handed Reinforced
3) Two-Handed

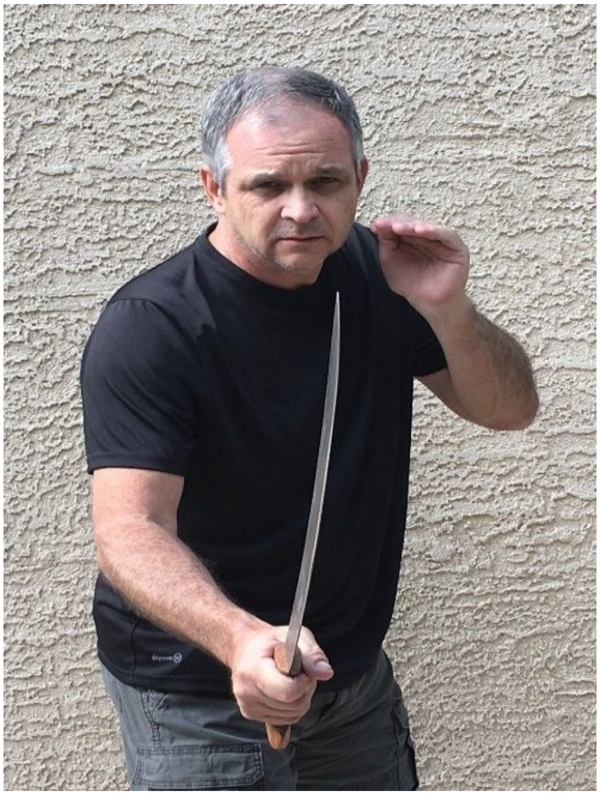
Let’s look at the three methods in greater detail.

One-Handed

The one-handed method is typically employed with a shorter sword that is light enough to be easily manipulated with one hand. Swords such as the saber, bolo, cutlass, or machete are common examples of one-handed weapons.

In some cases, a long sword or a sword meant to be used with two hands may be used one-handed. A classic example of this is how the famous swordsman Miyamoto Musashi fought with two swords in his Hyoho Niten Ichi-ryu style, by holding the long sword in one hand and the short sword in his other. An injury suffered during an encounter could also cause the inability to hold the sword with two hands. Regardless of the sword you favor, you should practice using it with only one hand, and also become comfortable using it with your weak hand as well.

The below photograph shows a typical one-handed guard position. Later on, when we discuss the actual movements and cutting patterns, I will say to start from a guard position. If you are using a one-handed sword, this is a simple guard position you can use. This is just an example, feel free to utilize any guard position that suits your style.



One-Handed Reinforced

Situations may occur where you are using a sword that was designed to be wielded with one hand, but there is a need to reinforce your cuts and generate additional power. In these situations, the one-handed reinforced grip is extremely beneficial. To execute this grip cup your empty hand along the wrist of your weapon hand. From this grip you can add strength to your wrist and use your empty arm to help supply power to your defensive techniques and attacks.

The one-handed reinforced grip is normally not held continuously during an encounter, but rather utilized when the situation requires extra power and stability in the attack. The below photograph shows the guard position with the one-handed reinforced grip.

Two-Handed

Swords that are heavy, large, or long will normally require the use of two hands to effectively manipulate. Holding the sword with two hands will greatly increase your power and control of the blade, but to some degree your mobility will be more limited than when using a sword with only one hand.

One of the best methods that I have found for holding the sword with two hands is to slightly twist your palms inward as you grip in a manner similar to wringing out a wet dish rag. Your grip should be held tight with your bottom three fingers and thumb while the index finger grips slightly looser. The below photograph shows a basic two-handed posture.

As we explore the actual movements and cutting patterns, be sure to practice them with all three of the hand positions we have discussed. Later we will explore additional ways to execute the movements and patterns beyond these basic methods. For now, focus on these three positions until they become second nature.

If your goal is to only practice with one specific type of sword, feel free to ignore the positions that don't apply. Eventually you will want to become proficient with any type of blade. You can always come back and implement the other positions later.

Now that you understand the key concepts and you have three basic methods of executing each technique at your disposal, it's time to get into the core movements.

Sword Movements

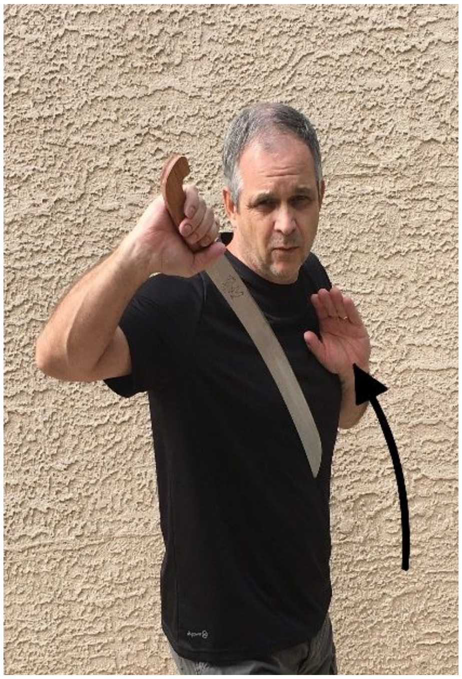
In this chapter we will look at twenty highly effective sword movements. I call these techniques core movements because they have been the most beneficial to me over the years that I have been practicing sword fighting. These movements have been my "go-to" techniques that link all of my sword skills together. I firmly believe that if you seriously study these movements, they will provide you with a solid foundation in sword fighting skills. In addition, they can be applied to virtually any type of sword. Enough talk let's begin!

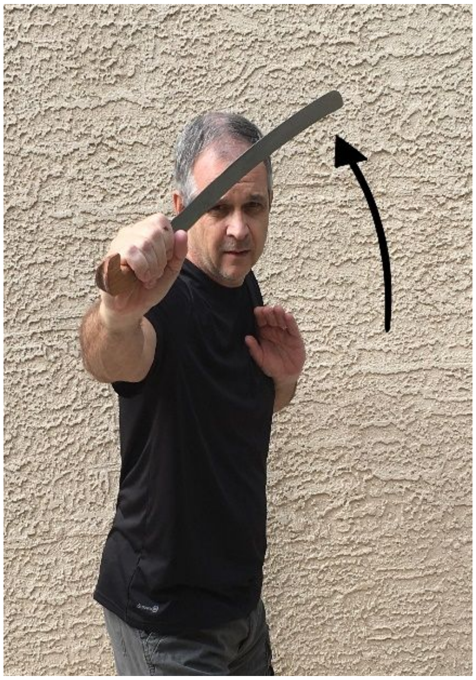
Movement #1

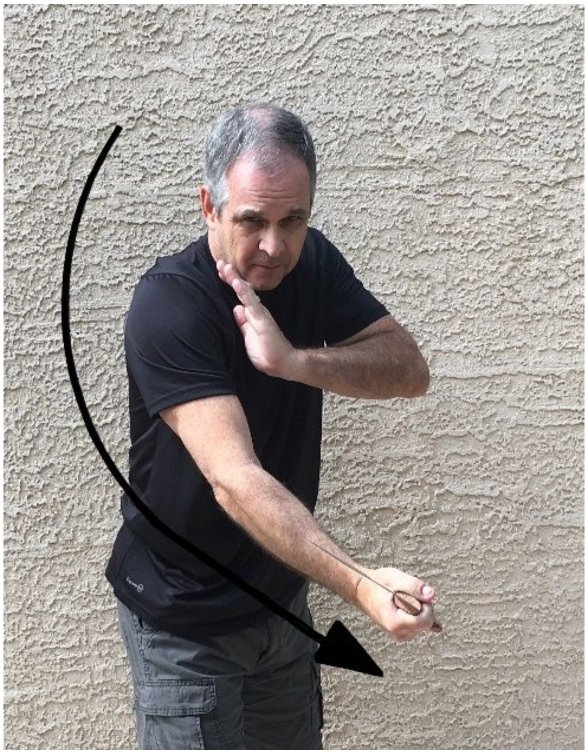
Draw to Chest and Downward Diagonal Cut

The draw to chest and downward diagonal cut is a powerful movement that is executed in a very fluid manner. First, pull the flat edge of the blade up in front of your chest until the point of the blade reaches the area of your solar plexus. From this position, immediately bring the tip of the sword around in front of your head and execute a downward diagonal cut. The initial motion of the technique resembles the action you would make to draw the sword from a sheath on your belt. This drawing motion will obviously vary depending on how long your sword is. The draw flows directly into the attack without hesitation.

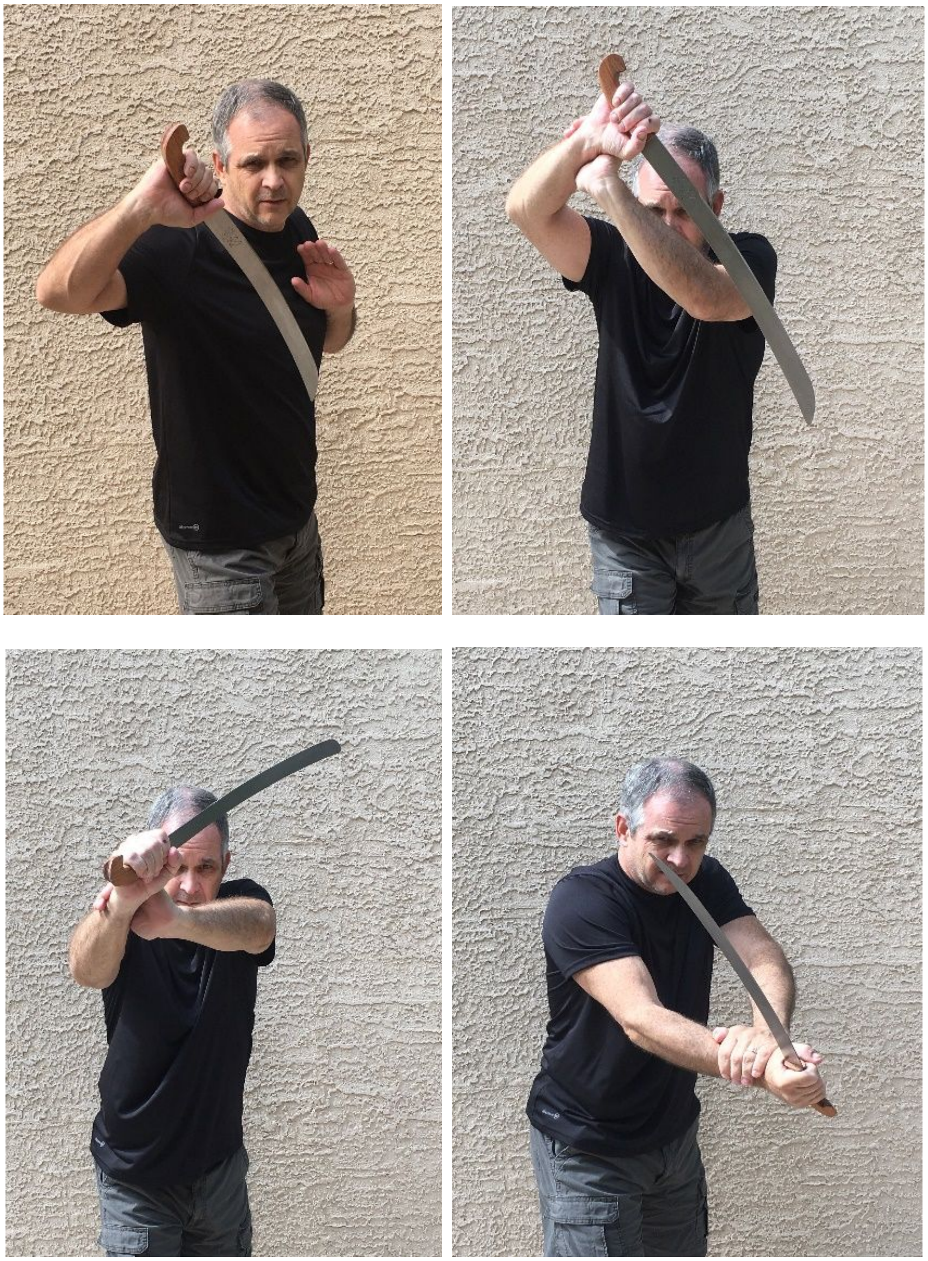
This movement is also extremely useful when the tip of your blade is pointed downward to the inside of your body. It allows you to cover your upper body and flow directly into an attack without first changing the position of your sword or wasting valuable time adjusting the blade. You should practice this movement repeatedly until it becomes second nature. You will discover the initial drawing motion of the sword will appear again in other movements we will study.





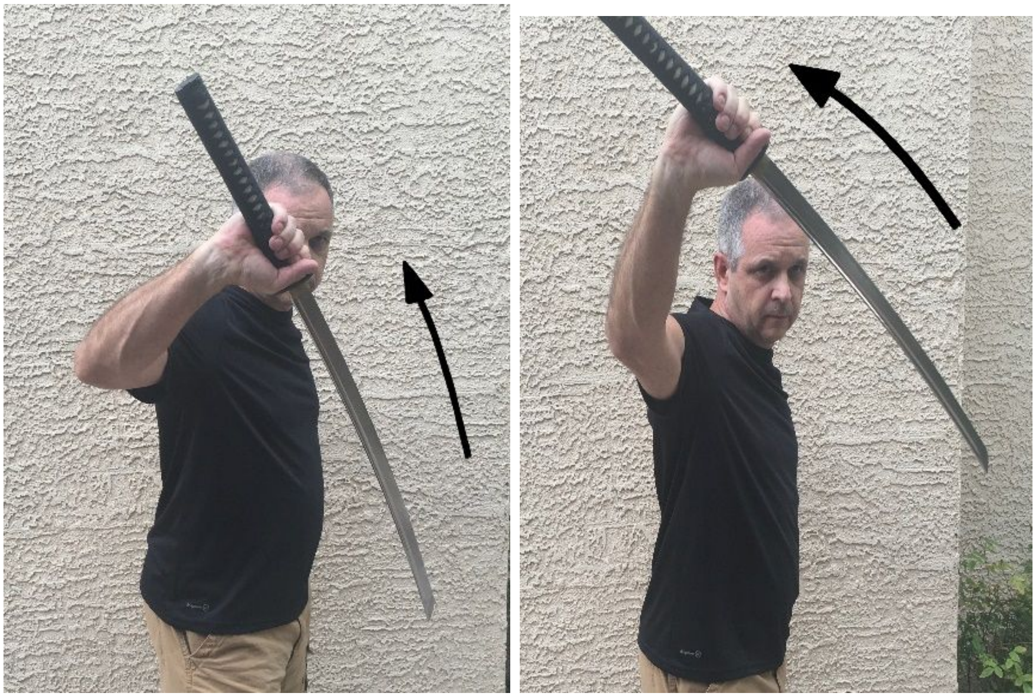


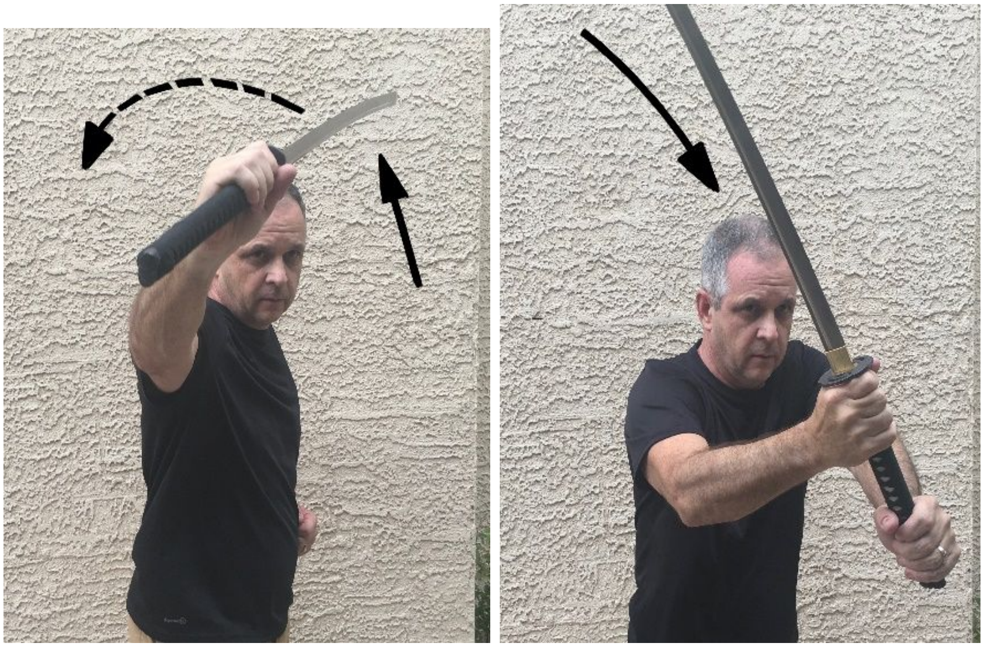
Now let's look at the same movement performed with a one-handed reinforced grip. The movements are essentially the same, just a slight modification is made by using your rear hand to support your strong hand on the weapon. First the blade is lifted and pulled to the chest area in the same manner as the one-handed version of the technique. As the blade starts to travel around for the downward diagonal cut, the rear hand grabs the wrist and provides additional power and control throughout the cutting motion. The below photos show this version of the movement.

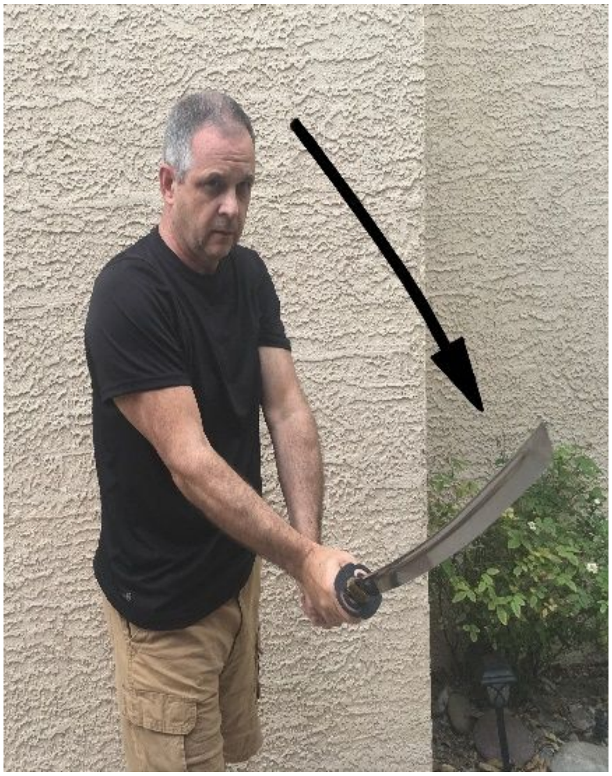


Movement #1- Two-Handed Version

Now we will look at executing the movement with the two-handed sword. In this version, the practitioner is using a long Japanese katana. The sword is drawn as if pulling it from an imaginary scabbard. You could perform this technique by actually drawing the sword from a real scabbard if you choose. As the blade rises and the tip of the sword starts to circle up and forward, your rear hand grabs the bottom of the sword handle for a two-handed grip. The downward diagonal cut is then made with both hands while moving forward. The below photographs show this version of the drill. I can’t stress enough the importance of looking at each of the drills and patterns in this book from all three of these versions. Train your mind to think in terms of principles rather than sword styles or types of swords.



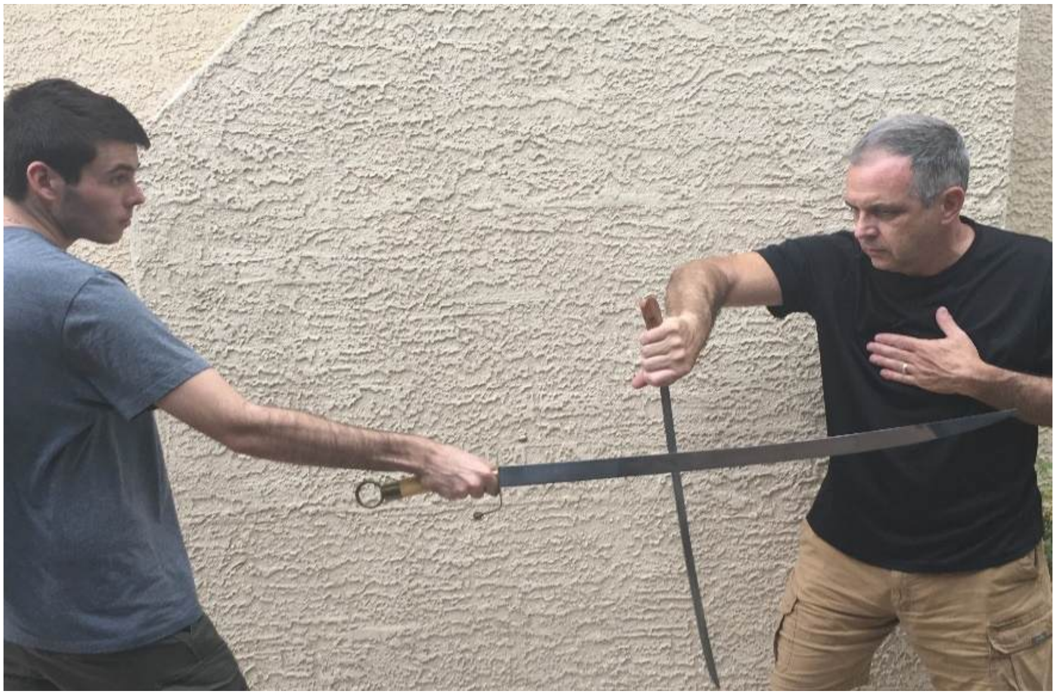


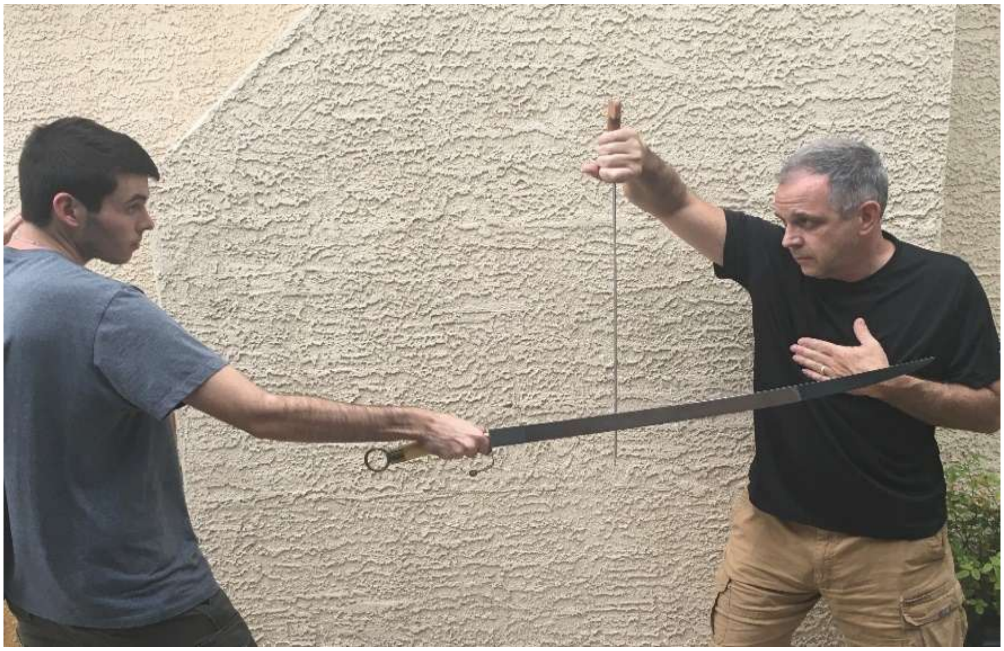


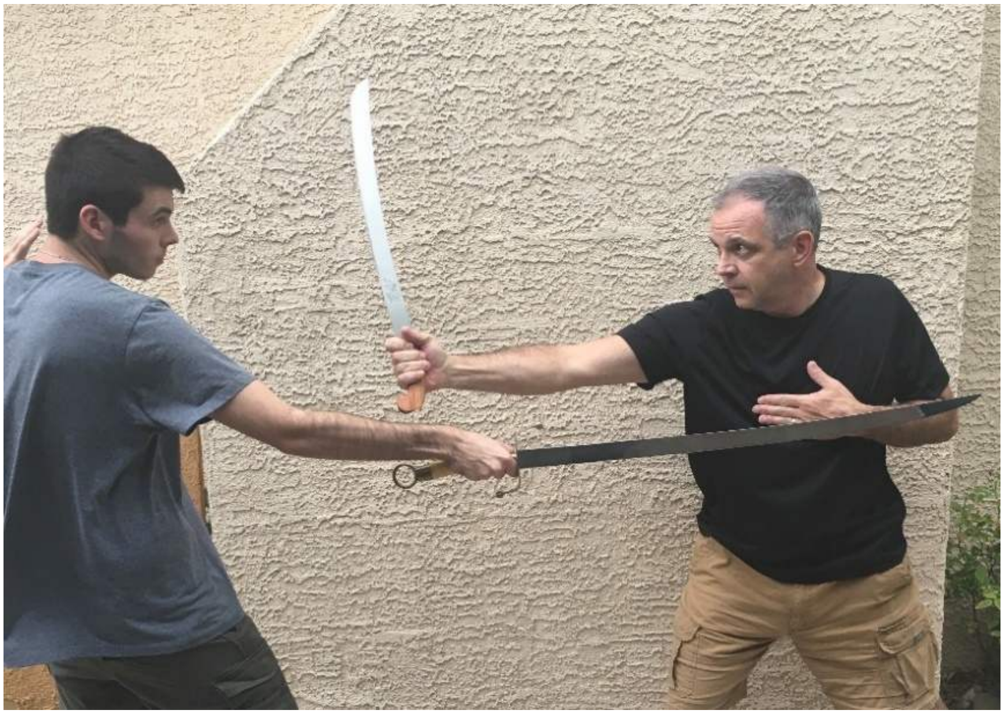
As we move forward, I will not show the one-handed reinforced version of each movement because that would take too much space and make the book cumbersome. I will focus on the one-handed and two-handed methods exclusively. Just remember as you study each movement that all of the techniques and cutting patterns can be applied to any sword type or system with just minor adaptations.

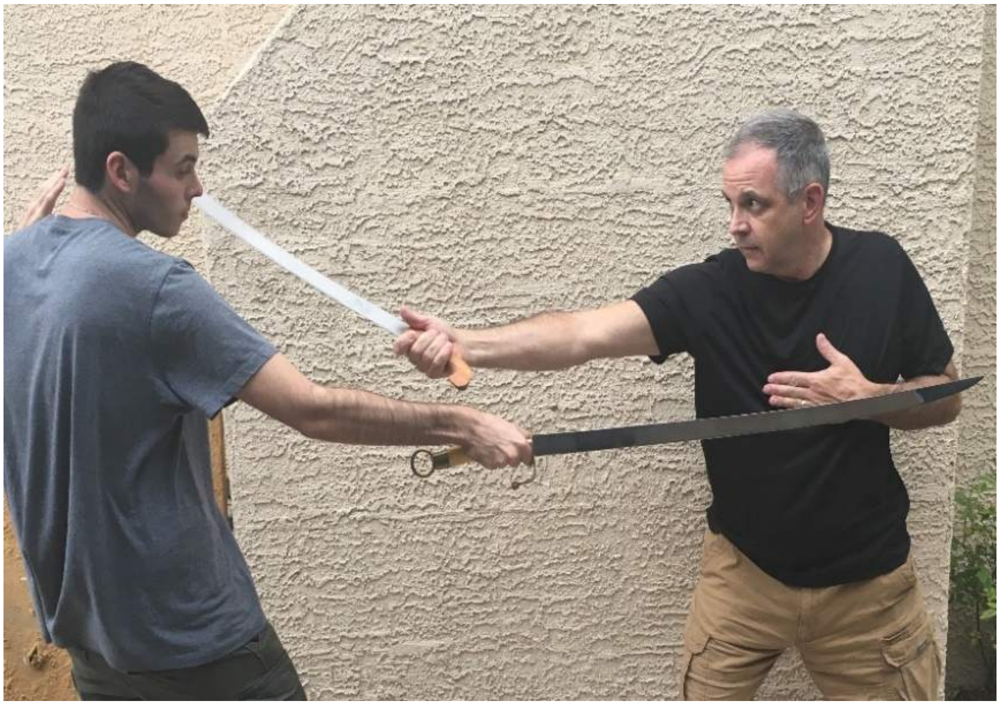
Movement #1- Application

The below photographs show one possible application of movement #1. As the attacker thrusts with his sword, the defender sidesteps to the right and draws his weapon upward as he parries the attacker's thrust. He then flows into a downward diagonal slash to the attacker's neck. He maintains constant awareness of where the attacker's sword blade is throughout the technique.







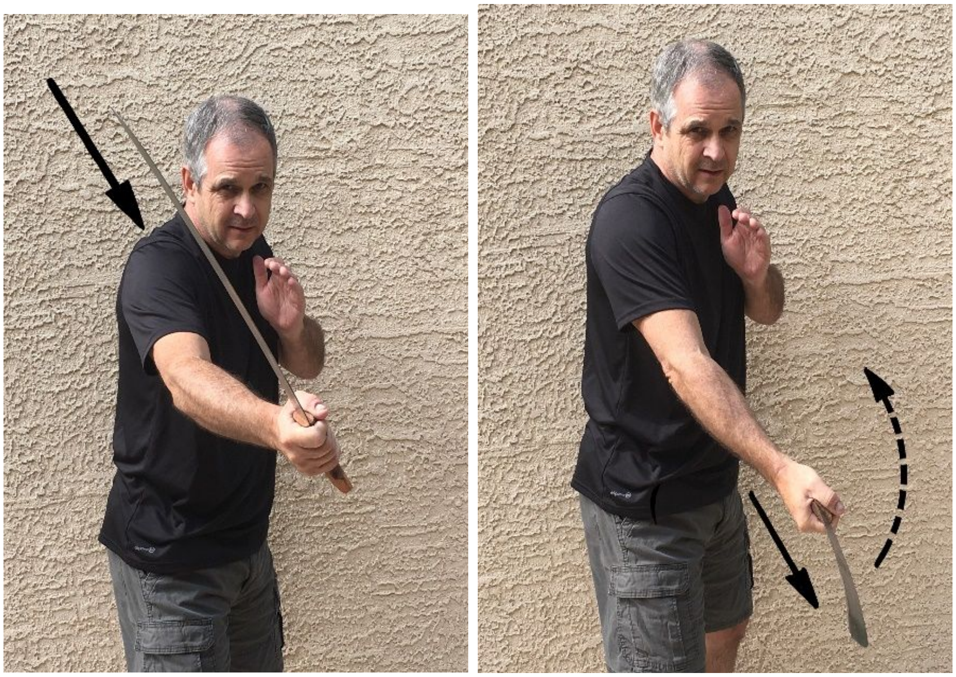


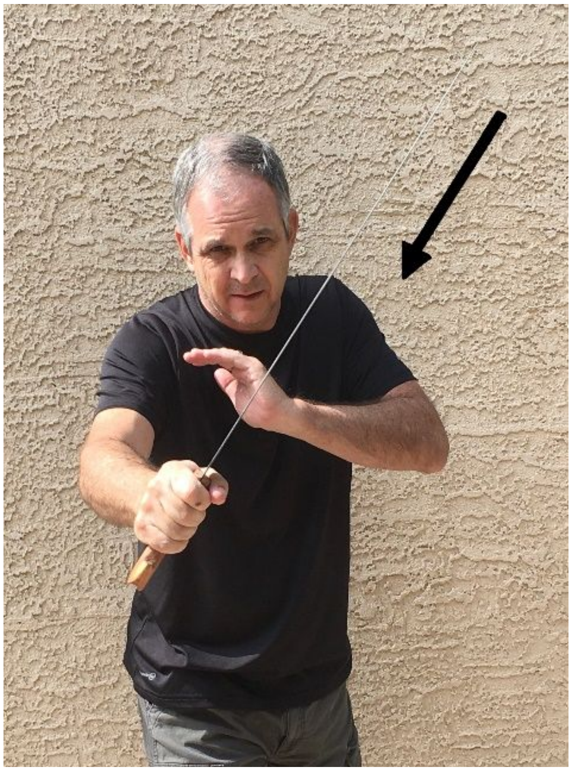
Movement #2

The V Cut

The V cut is an excellent movement to tighten up your cutting motions and smooth out your technique with the sword. Begin by executing a diagonal downward slash to the right side. As your sword blade passes through the intended target, rotate the tip of the blade inward and transition into a downward diagonal cut to the left side. The two cuts combined form the shape of the letter V. The concept of visualizing various shapes as you execute cuts with the sword will be covered in greater detail later in the cutting patterns section of the book.

It is important to keep the rotation of the sword tip and the cutting motions tight and to not overextend when you execute the cuts. The below photos show the V cut technique being performed. As with all of the techniques we will cover, repeat the cutting movements continuously without a break in the flow of motion. Practice each movement on both sides of your body until they become second nature.

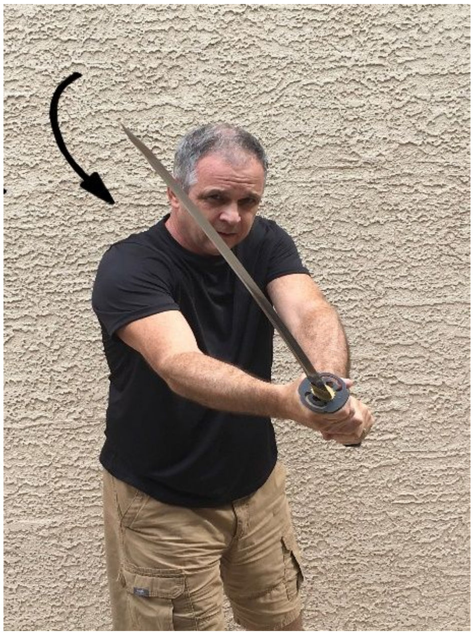


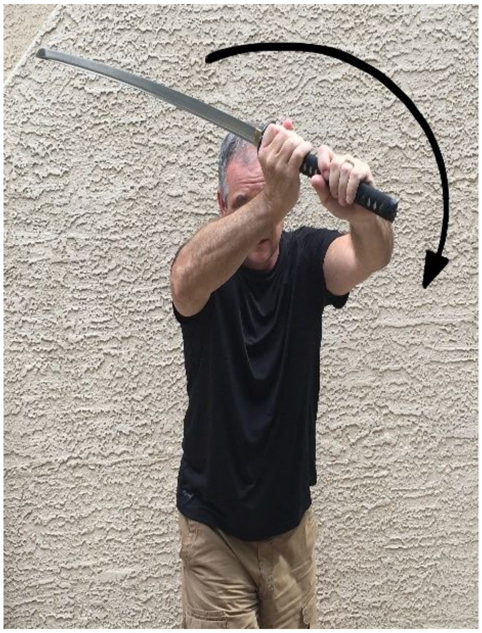


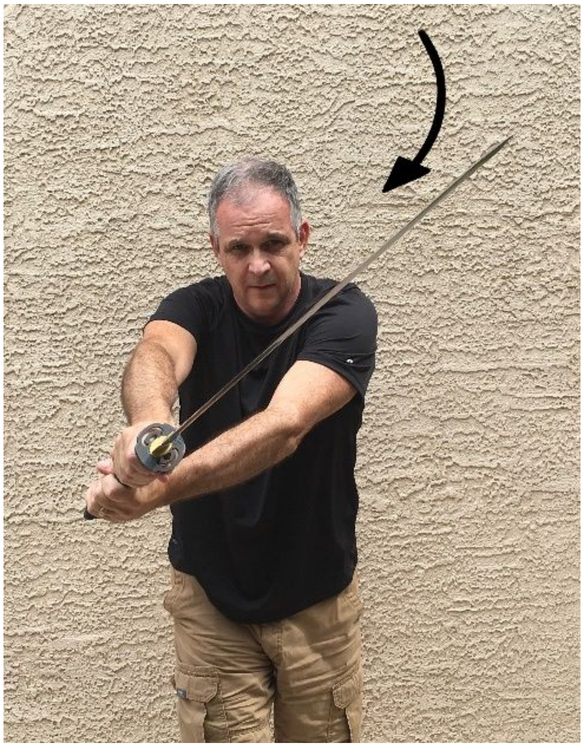
Movement #2- Two-Handed Version

To execute movement #2 with a two-handed sword, simply start from a guard position and strike downward diagonally to your right side followed by a downward diagonal cut to your left side. The two cuts form the shape of the letter V. Make the cuts smooth and flowing from start to finish. You may start the cut to your left side as well. Repeat the technique multiple times, keeping the cutting motions tight.

One excellent way to practice this movement with a larger two-handed sword is to alternate taking a step forward with each of your feet as you execute each of the diagonal cuts. For example, when you cut downward to your right side, step forward with your right foot. Bring the right foot back and then step forward with your left foot as you cut downward to your left side. The below photos show movement #2 performed with a two-handed sword.





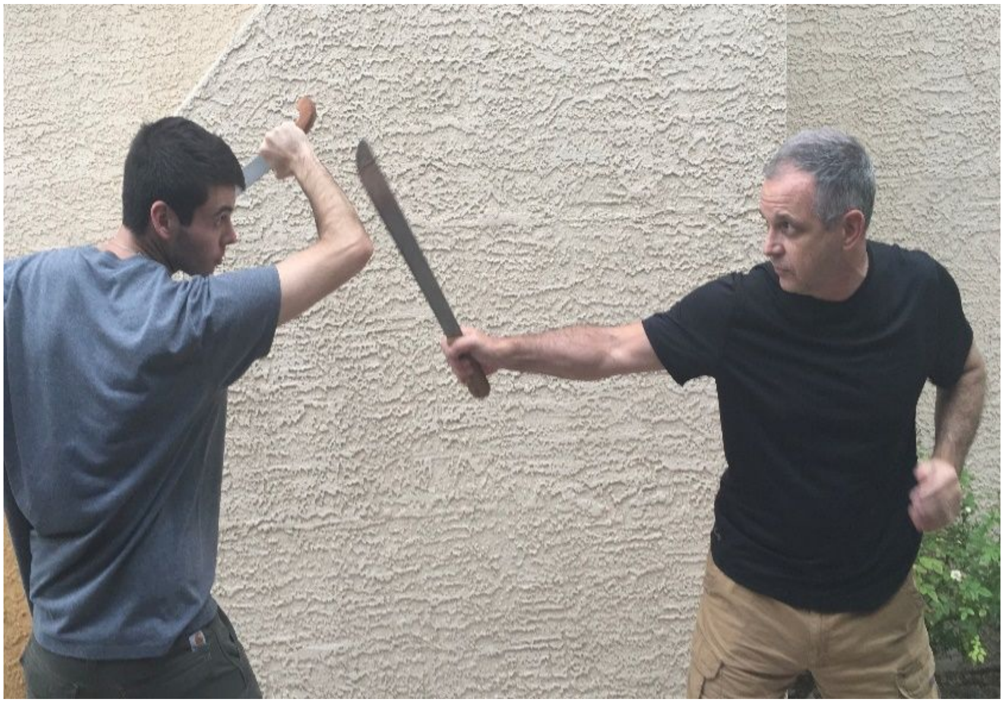


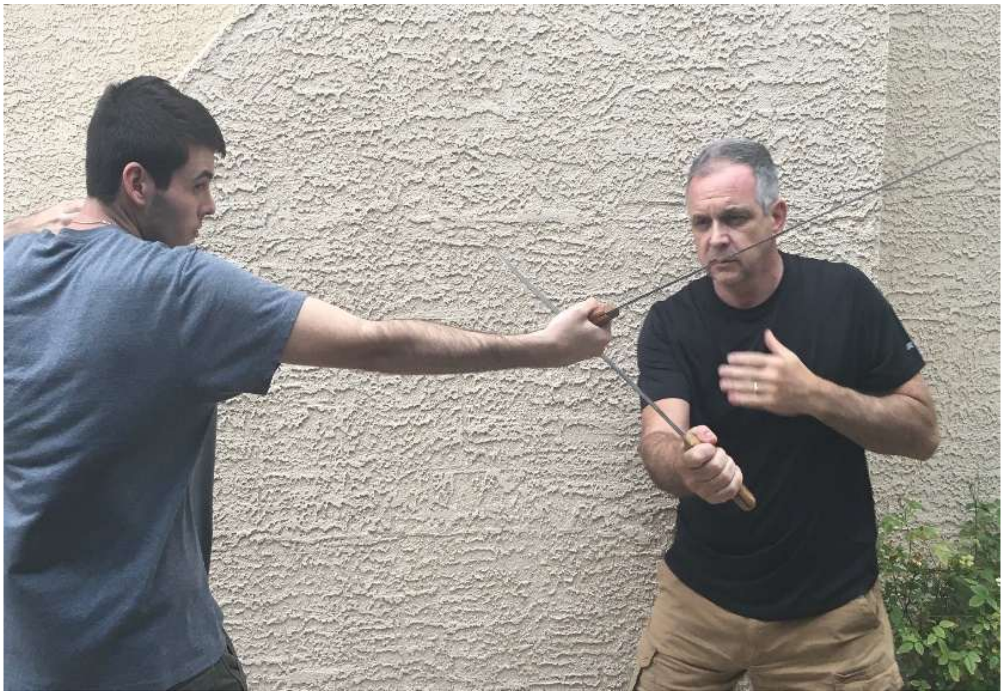
Movement #2-Application

Every movement contains numerous applications that will become apparent as your training progresses. One way to discover new applications is to think of different target areas for the strikes contained within each technique. In this application of movement #2, the defender targets the opponet’s attacking arm. This is obviously a very common tactic in sword fighting because it is safer and easier to attack the oppoent's limb verses attacking the body and exposing yourself to a counter attack.

Every sword system I have studied, from Filipino martial arts to European sword styles utilize the concept of attacking the opponent's limb. The opponent's weapon hand will often be the closest target available to you. This is commonly known as defanging the snake in the Filipino martial arts systems.

In the below example, the opponent starts to attack with an overhead slash that the defender checks by striking the opponent's weapon arm with a downward diagonal cut. This motion would normally end the encounter by disabling the opponent's sword wielding arm. However in this case, the opponent is able to continue his attack and he launches a downward diagonal slash towards the defender. The defender uses a downward diagonal slash of his own to slice the opponent's weapon hand. Angling off line and proper footwork are essential elements of this application. Notice the V cut motion that is contained within the techniques.





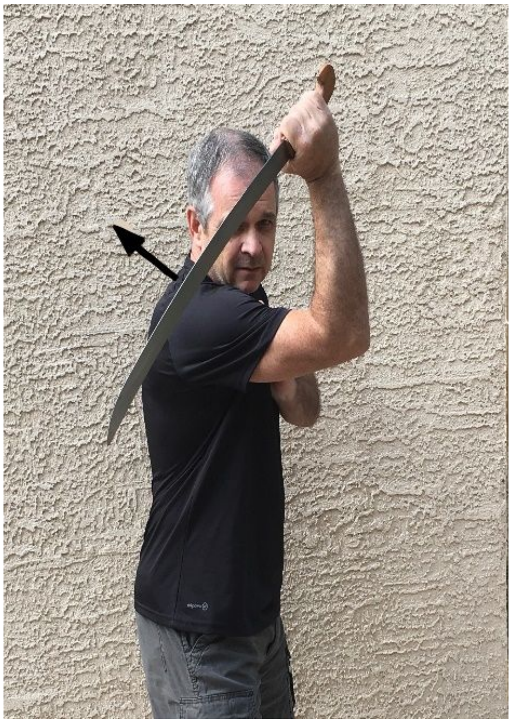
Movement #3

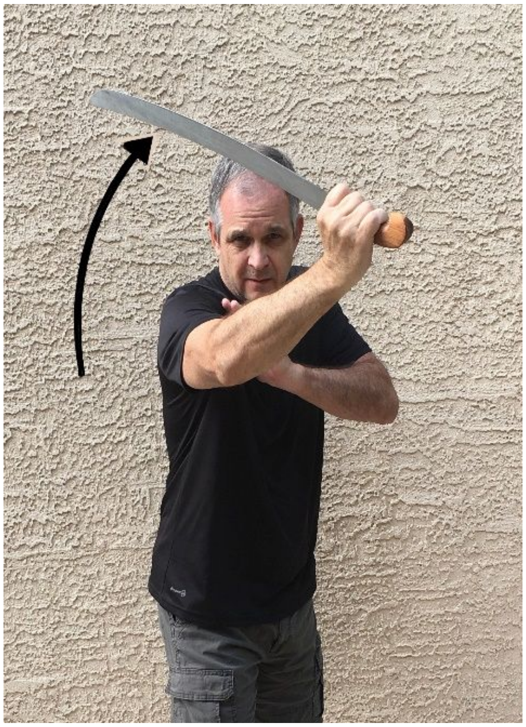
Shield Cover and Downward Diagonal Cut

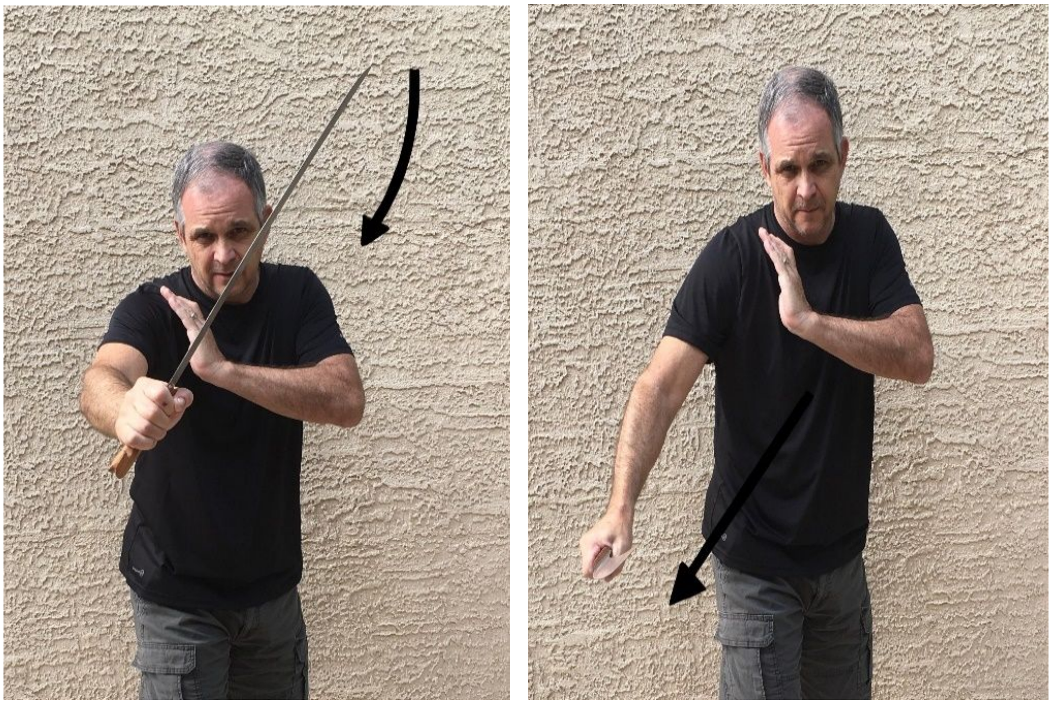
To execute this movement, start from a guard position. Keep the point of your sword stationary as you bring your weapon hand straight up. This motion causes the blade to form a shield that covers your body on the right side. Keep your eyes on your opponent by looking through the triangle shape that is now formed between the blade, your biceps, and your forearm. Next, bring the tip of the sword in a circular motion in front of your head as you flow into a diagonal downward cut through the target. When the blade reaches the end of your cut, you can raise your weapon hand directly upward and execute another shield cover to begin the exercise again. Make sure there is no hesitation between movements and the drill is executed in one flowing motion from start to finish. The below photographs show movement #3 being performed.

Notice in the photos that the rear hand is kept close to the body at all times and is not allowed to dangle or to extend to where it could be a target for the opponent. It is important when using a one-handed sword to keep your rear hand active but not exposed. Usually, the free hand is held near the chest or extended back behind the body. While extending it back helps keep your torso sideways and prevents the arm and hand from being targeted, it also makes it more difficult to trap, parry, grab or strike with the free hand. I prefer to keep it near my chest.

The free hand is sometimes called the “live” hand because of the active role it plays in attack and defense. It should be mentioned that in historical sword fighting, it was used extensively. If during a deadly encounter there was a chance to grab the opponent’s blade to save your life you would literally seize the opportunity. Ancient combatants often wore gloves or gauntlets to protect their hands in these situations. I have also been taught methods of disarming a sword by grabbing the flat of the blade by some of my teachers. Keep these ideas in mind as you train with these movements.

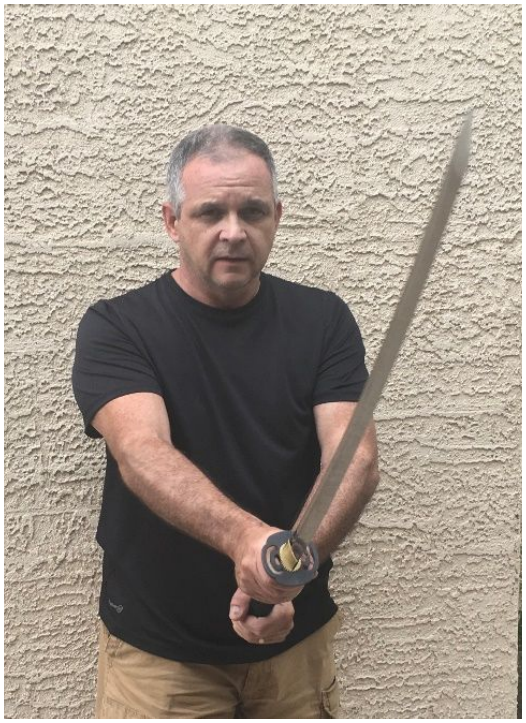


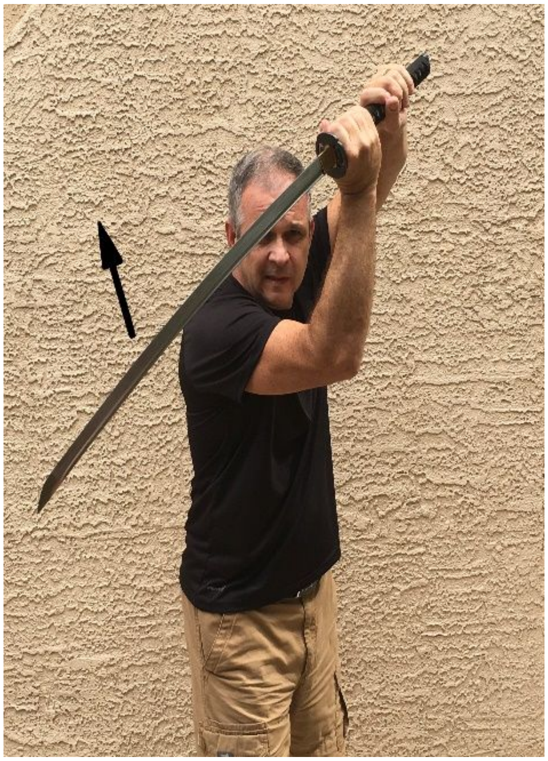


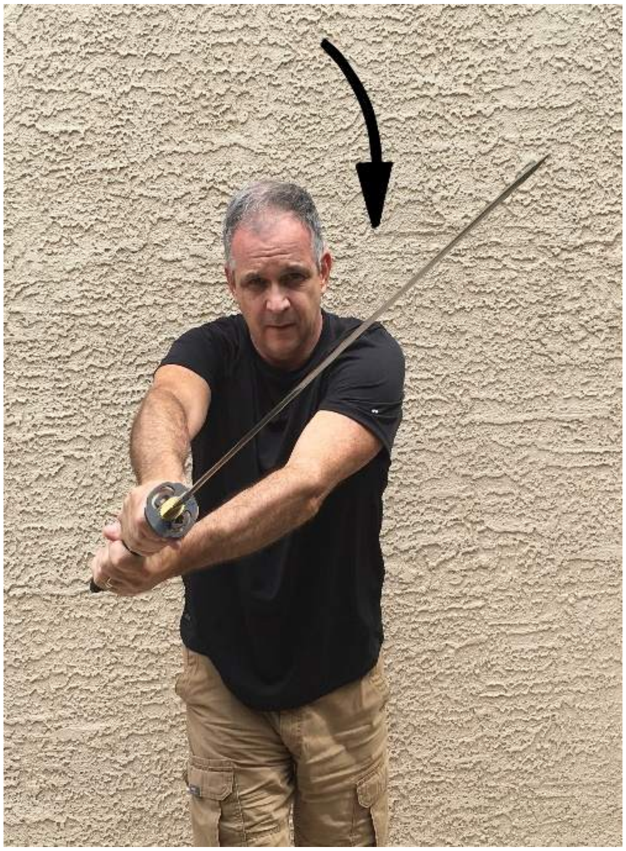


Movement #3-Two-Handed Version

This is a very common movement in numerous sword fighting styles. Let's take a quick look at the two handed version of this drill. From a guard position, raise your sword handle upwards toward your forehead while keeping the tip of the sword blade down to cover or "shield" your right side. In a continuous motion, bring the blade up and around your head as you flow into a downward diagonal cut. At the completion of the cut, you can execute the movement on the opposite side of the body. This technique develops an extremely powerful downward diagonal cut and builds strength in your forearms and shoulders. Try to remain relaxed as you perform the movements. Tensing up will cause you to tire quickly and make the movements less fluid.

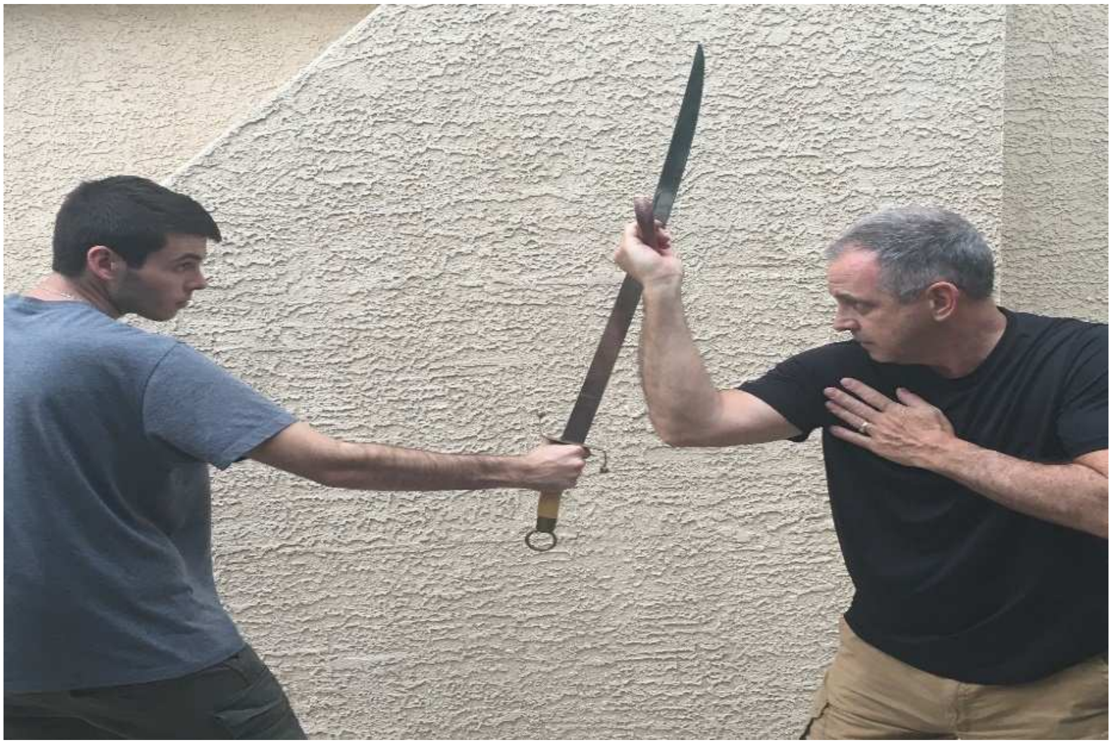


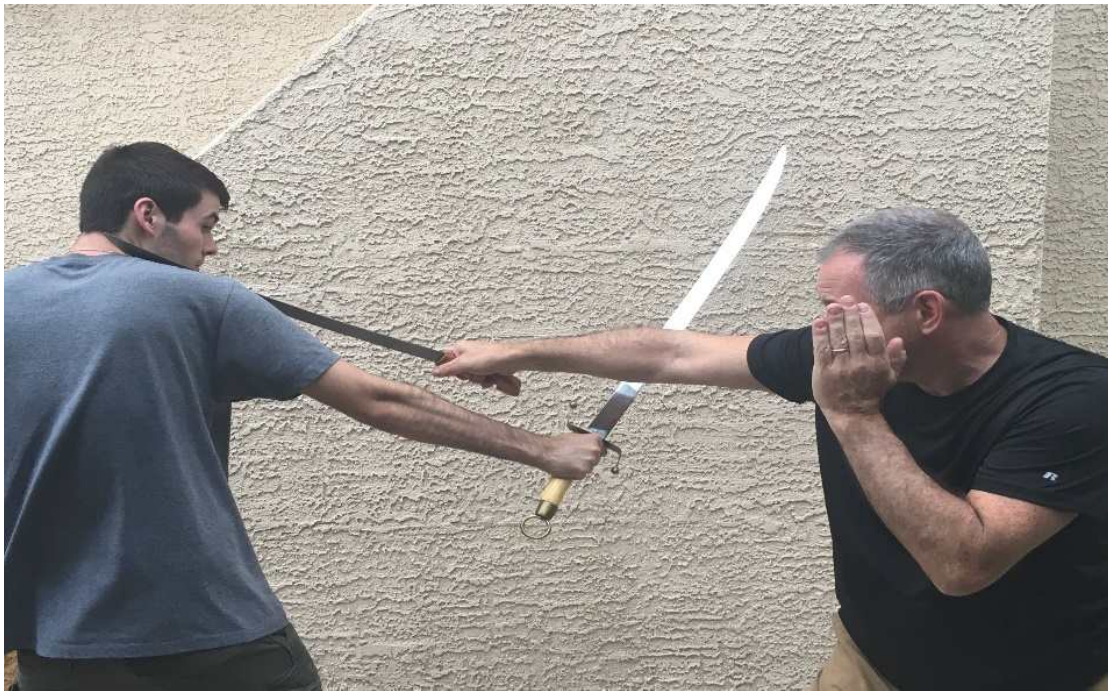




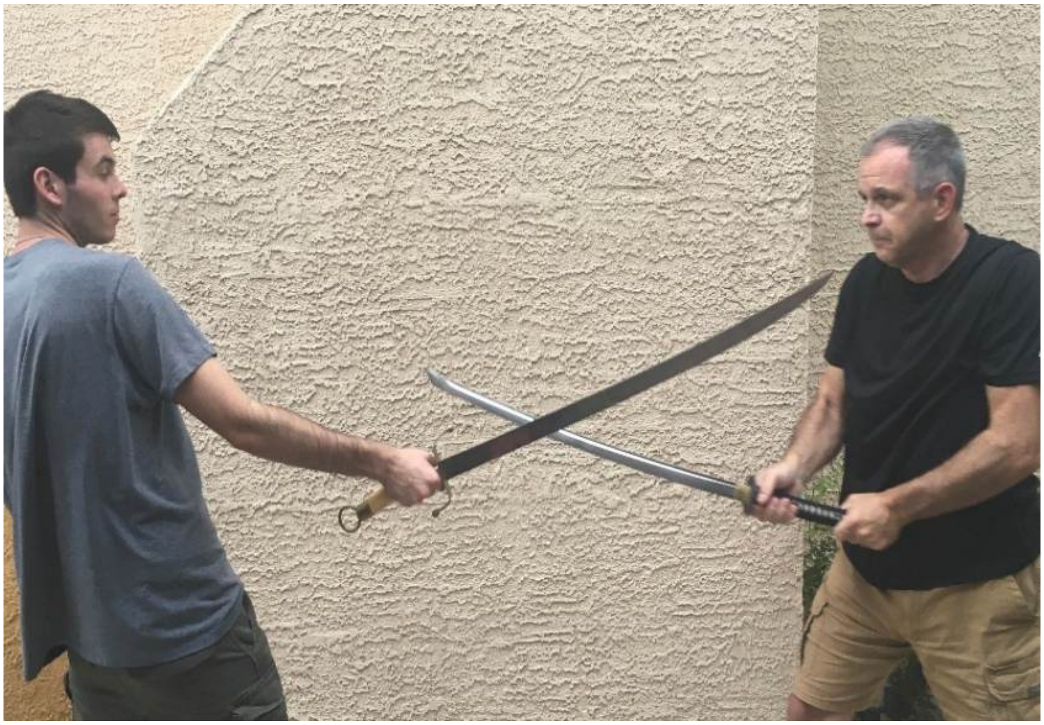
Movement #3-Application

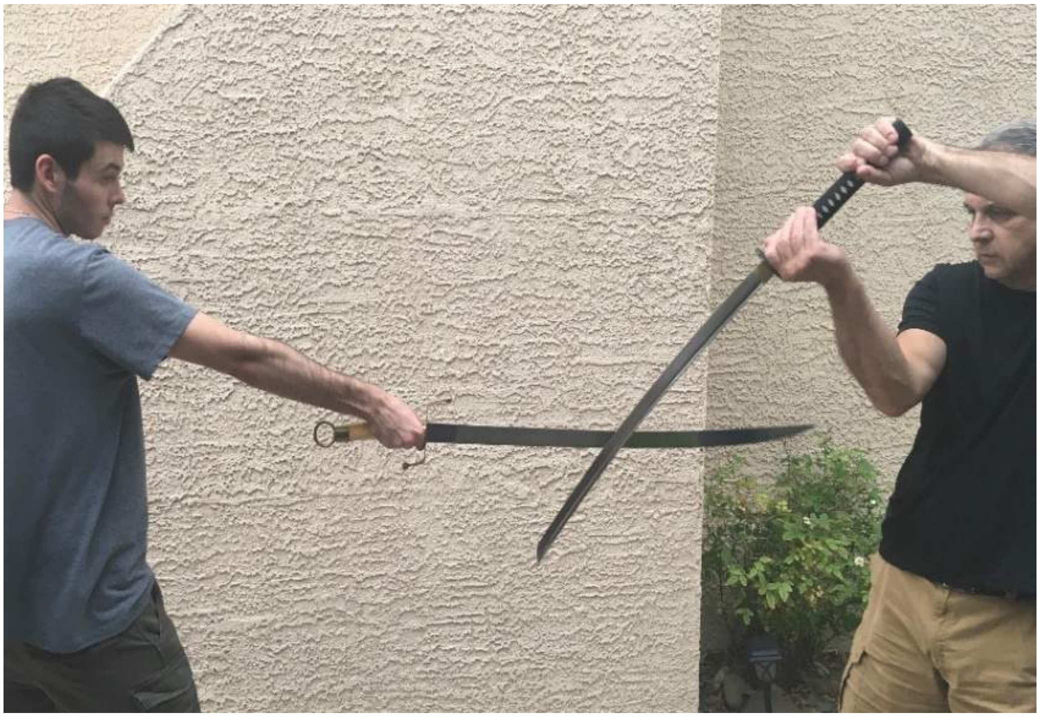
As the attacker strikes with an overhead cut, the defender angles off line and uses a shield cover to protect his head and the upper right side of his body. He immediately rotates his sword around and delivers a downward diagonal cut to the attacker’s neck. As with the previous application, he maintains constant awareness of where the attacker’s blade is and is prepared to counter any additional attacks. It is important to think of the shield cover as a parry or deflection rather than a block. When properly executed, the combination of footwork and body angling are the real defensive measures. The shield provides insurance that the opponent’s blade will not hit you. Your blade makes only slight contact with the opponent’s blade as you execute the shield cover. Your blade then immediately rolls around for the diagonal cut. When properly executed, the diagonal cut seems to come out of nowhere to the attacker. The below photos show the technique in motion.

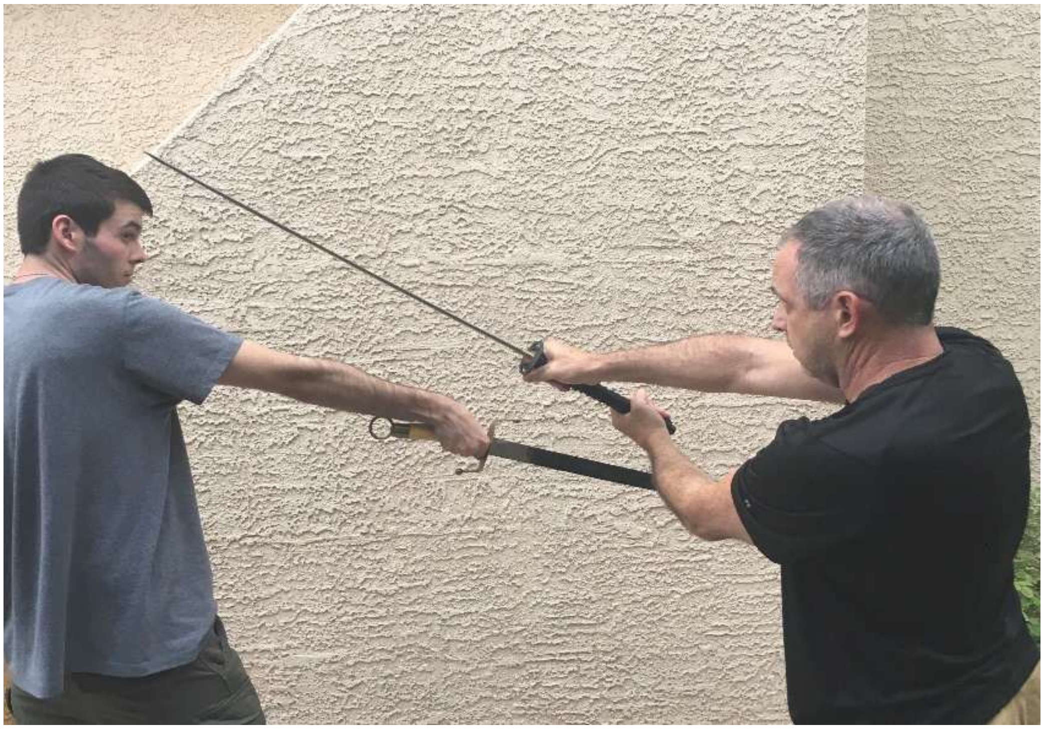




The application of the shield cover and downward diagonal cut is very similar with a two-handed sword. As the attacker and the defender close the distance, contact is made with their sword blades. The attacker thrusts his blade forward towards the defender. The defender immediately feels the thrust coming in and lifts the handle of his sword upward while maintaining contact on the attacker's blade and redirecting it to the side. As the defender is redirecting the attacker's blade with the shield cover, he is also moving his body forty-five-degrees off line and forward. This puts him in range for a counter strike. The defender finishes the encounter by rolling his blade up and off of the attacker's sword and executing a downward diagonal cut to his head. This entire technique would occur from start to finish in about one second.



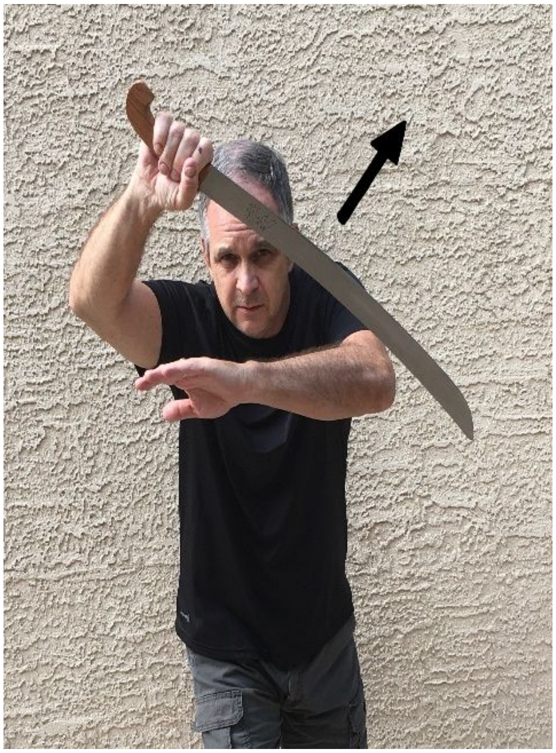


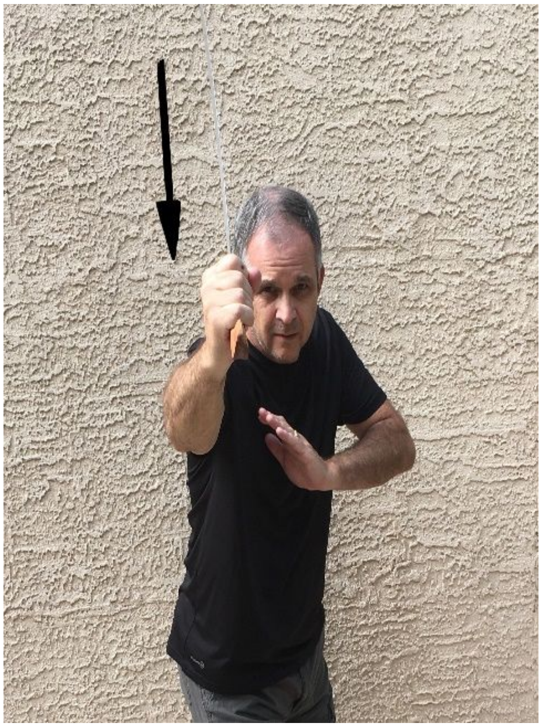


Movement #4

Roof Cover and Slash Down the Center

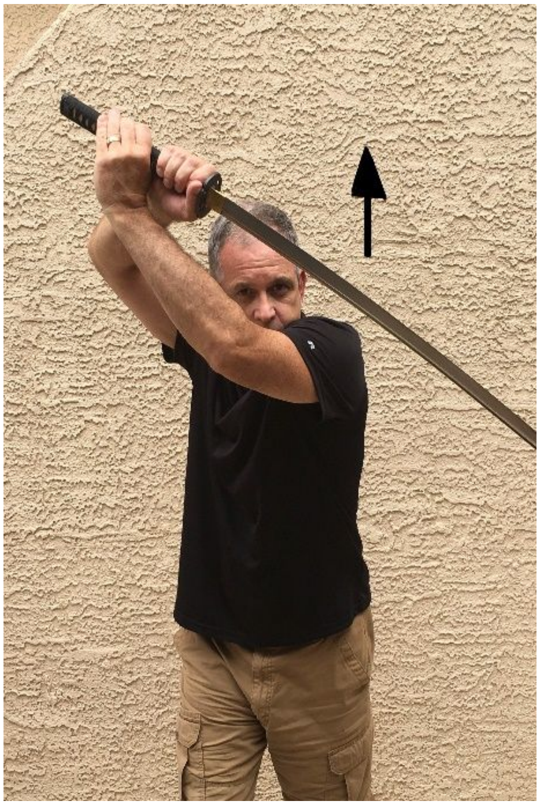
The Roof cover and slash down the center is an excellent technique for developing flow in your movements and the ability to transition quickly between a defensive technique and a counterattack. In the beginning stages, you should practice this movement from a stationary position to get the technique down, however the practical application of the roof cover requires you to angle offline from the opponent as the movement is executed. To get the most out of this technique, use triangular footwork or a sidestep to get your body offline as you execute the roof cover. To perform the movement, bring your sword blade up at a forty-five-degree angle to cover your head as you step forward diagonally to angle offline. Your rear hand stays inside the blade and acts as a checking hand to parry or trap an opponent's limb. When the sword blade is held in this position, it resembles a slanted roof over your head. As you cut downward through your target, pivot the rear foot back to ensure you are less of a target to the opponent. Remember to keep the movements tight and flow naturally.

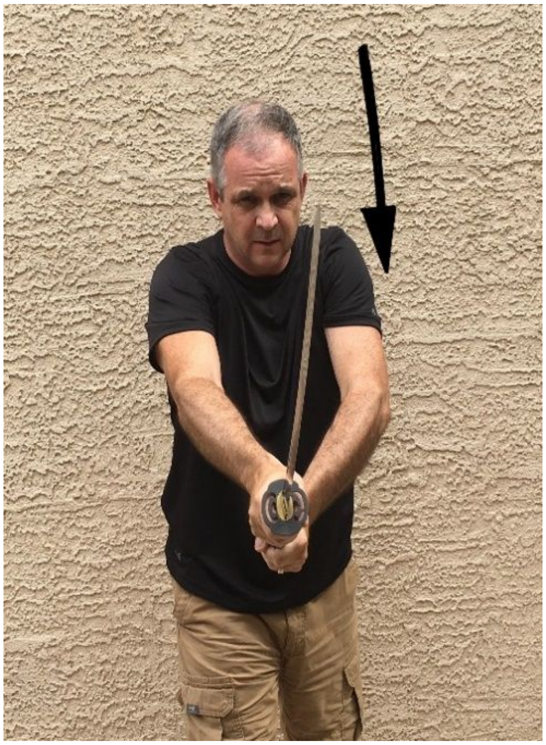




Movement #4- Two-Handed Version

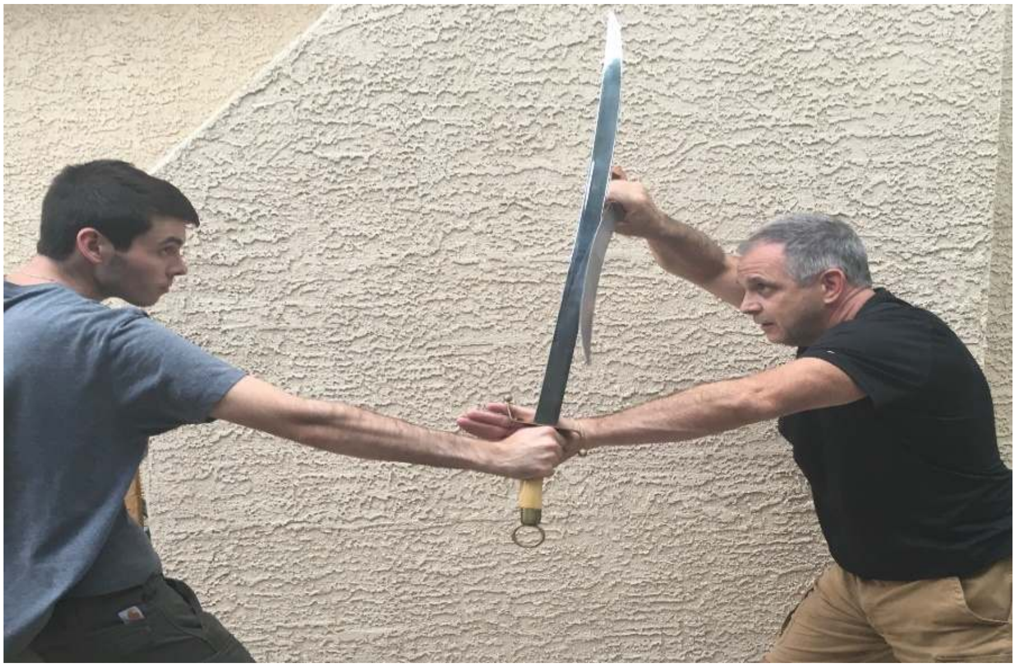
From a guard position, raise the handle of the sword to just above forehead level with the blade pointed downward at approximately a forty-five-degree angle. Keep your eyes on your imaginary opponent through the space between your arms and sword blade. Next, raise the point of the sword upwards above your head and transition into a downward slashing cut straight down the middle. The motion of raising the sword might cause you to loosen your grip slightly with your bottom hand. I suggest keeping the index finger, middle finger, and thumb gripped tightly and loosening the ring and pinky finger. As you perform the cutting motion, regrip with all of your fingers for more control. Keep the motions tight and flowing. As with the other movements, be sure to practice the techniques on both sides of your body to fully develop your skills.

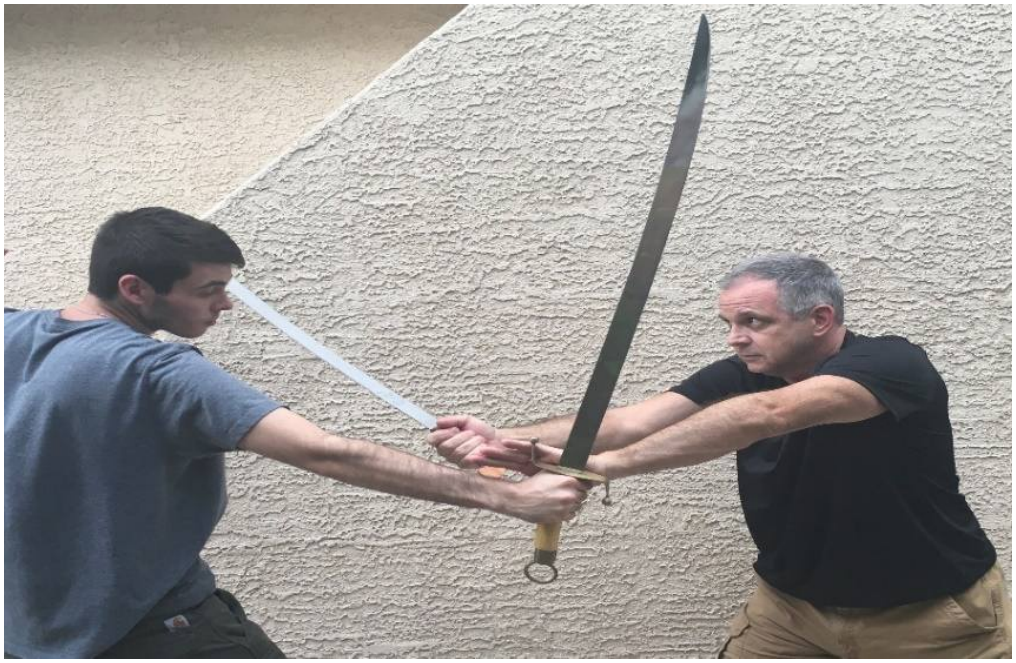




Movement #4-Application

The below photos show the practical application of the roof cover and counter attack. The attacker slashes downward towards the defender who angles inward as he uses a roof cover to protect his head and body. As with the shield cover, footwork and body angling are the key to avoiding the opponent's blade. The roof cover is additional insurance to ensure the opponent's weapon doesn't make contact. As the roof cover is executed, the defender uses his free hand to check and control the opponent's weapon hand. He then counters with a downward slash to the attacker's neck. Notice how the defender's body is off the line of attack during his counterattack. The roof cover is an excellent technique for closing the distance and making entry on the opponent.





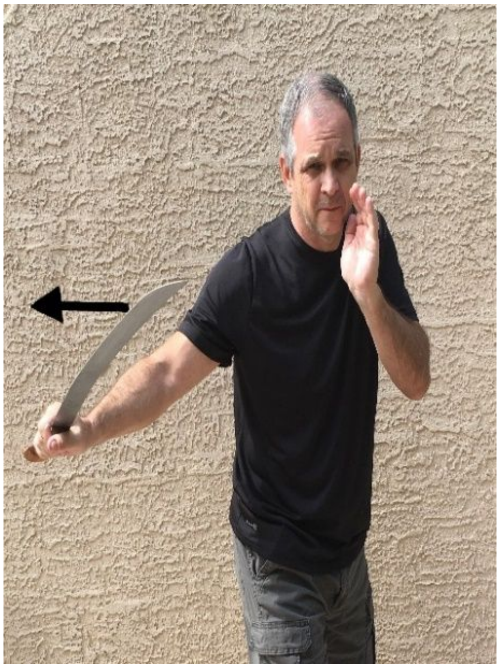
Movement #5

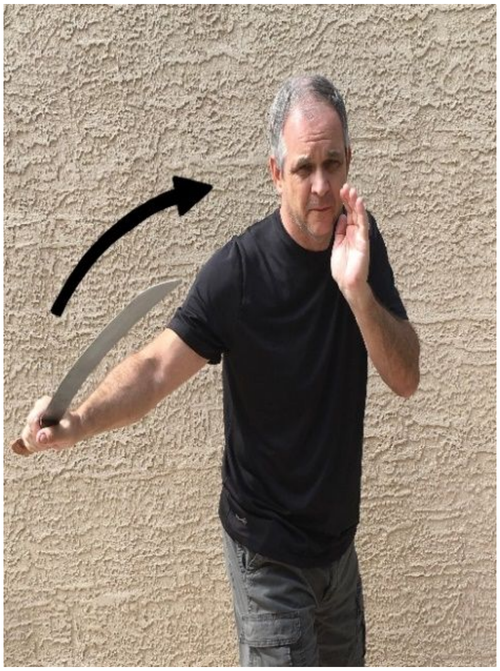
Outside Cut and Inside Hook Thrust

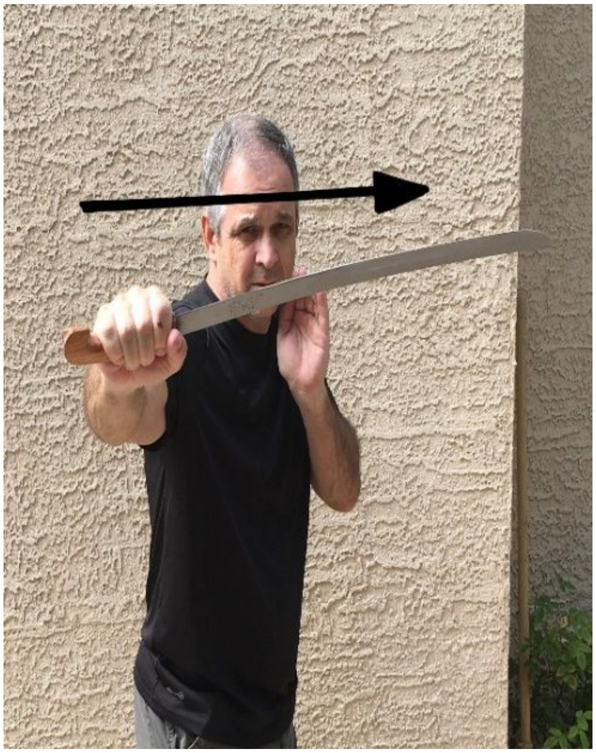
This movement begins with an outside cut to the side followed by a thrust that hooks inwards with the tip of the sword. To perform the outside cut, turn the edge of the blade outward by rotating your wrist. As a general rule, your middle knuckles will point in the same direction as the sword blade when holding the weapon. It is important to not overextend when executing the outside cut. If you overextend your movements, you will be off balance and your body will be exposed to the opponent. Overextending also increases the time it takes to launch a counter attack.

The hook thrust comes directly from the completion of the outside cut with no wind up motion. Remember that the sword does not require a lot of power to cause significant damage. A light cut that penetrates only a couple of inches can puncture vital organs and arteries.

As a final note, keep in mind that the techniques contained in the movements can be used for both offensive and defensive purposes. The outside cut in this movement for example, can be used to slash an opponent's arm, or to defend against an attack. Think outside the box as you practice. The below photographs show this movement being performed.

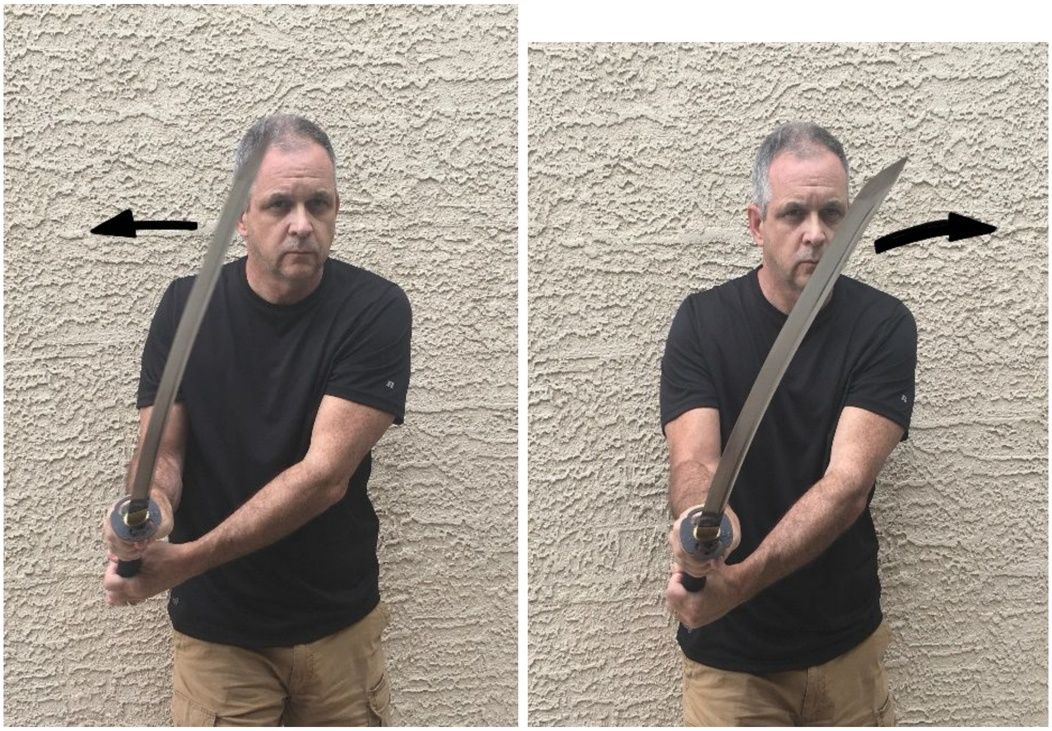


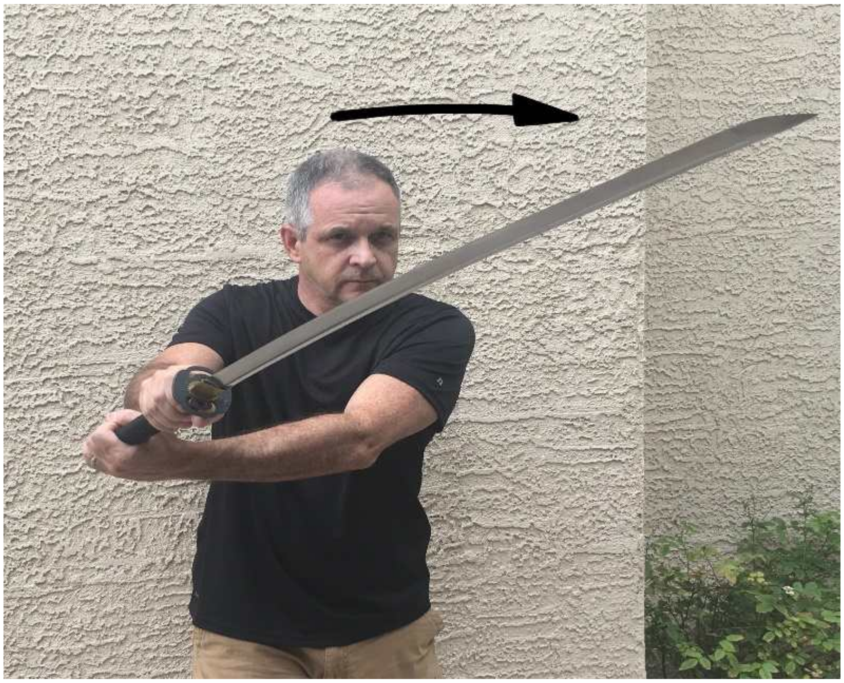




Movement #5-Two-Handed Version

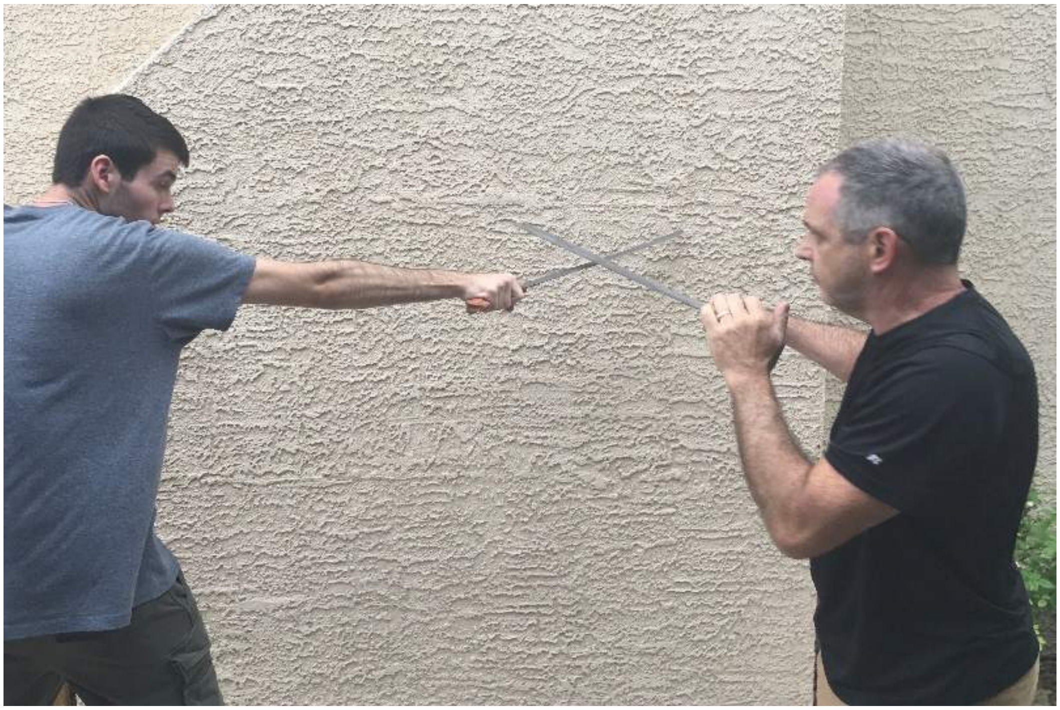
This movement is performed with a two-handed sword in a manner almost identical to the one-handed version. From a guard position, rotate your wrists outward and make a controlled cut to the outside. Keep the motion tight and avoid overextending past your shoulders. Immediately thrust inward with the tip of your blade. Just like the outside cut you just performed, do not over-extend the thrust. After the thrusting attack, recover to a guard position and repeat the movement to your opposite side. Experiment with various footwork as you execute the movement to determine what feels right and provides you with the most fluidity and power. A short shuffle step forward is what I normally use with this technique.

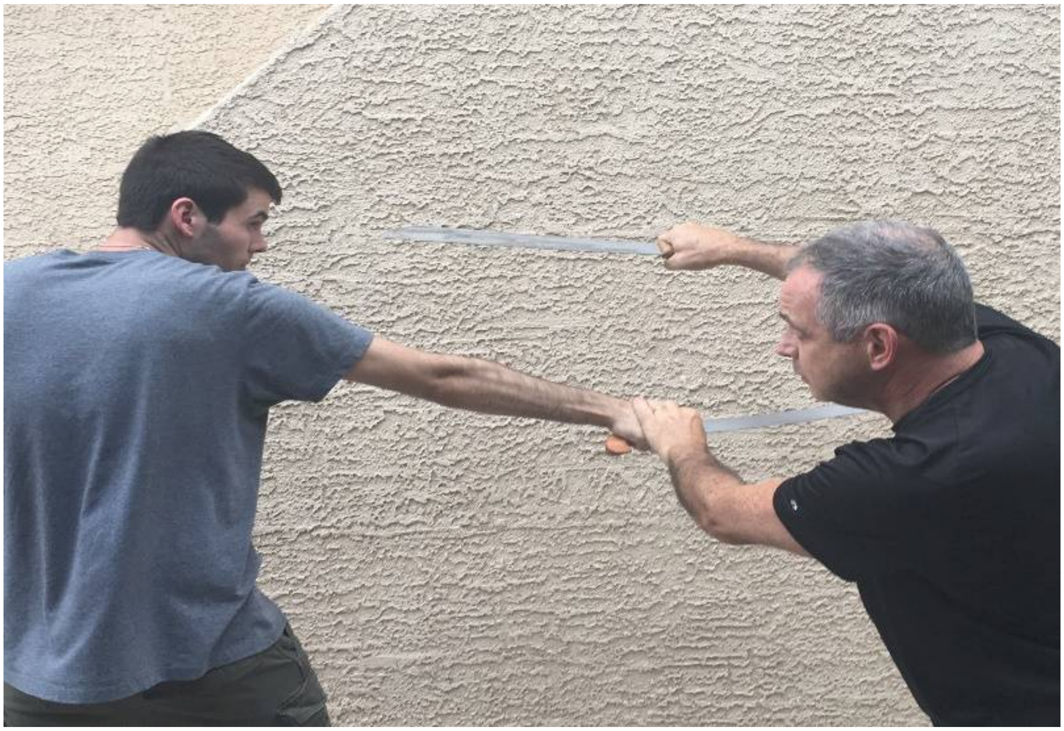




Movement #5- Application

The outside cut and inside hook thrust technique is extremely practical and has the ability to catch the opponent off guard and immediately put him on the defense. In the below photographs, the attacker strikes with a backhanded cut. The defender angles offline and uses an outside cut to stop the attack. Depending on range and timing, the outside cut can be aimed at the attacker's limb, body, or attacking sword. Usually, you want to avoid making direct contact with the opponent's sword, to prevent damaging your blade and using sheer force against force. This is why footwork is critical in blade combat. However, sometimes you will have no choice but to meet the opponent's attacking blade head on. When this occurs, you should try to make contact using the lower side portion of your blade. The sword blade is typically stronger close to the hilt, and you will have more control against the attack. After you perform the outside cut, immediately execute the inside hook thrust without retracting the blade. In some cases, the blunt force of the outside cut will allow you to bounce off the opponent's blade and directly into the thrusting attack. I have used this technique often in sparring and it almost always catches your opponent off guard because the tip of the sword hooking in is very difficult to see in your peripheral vision.

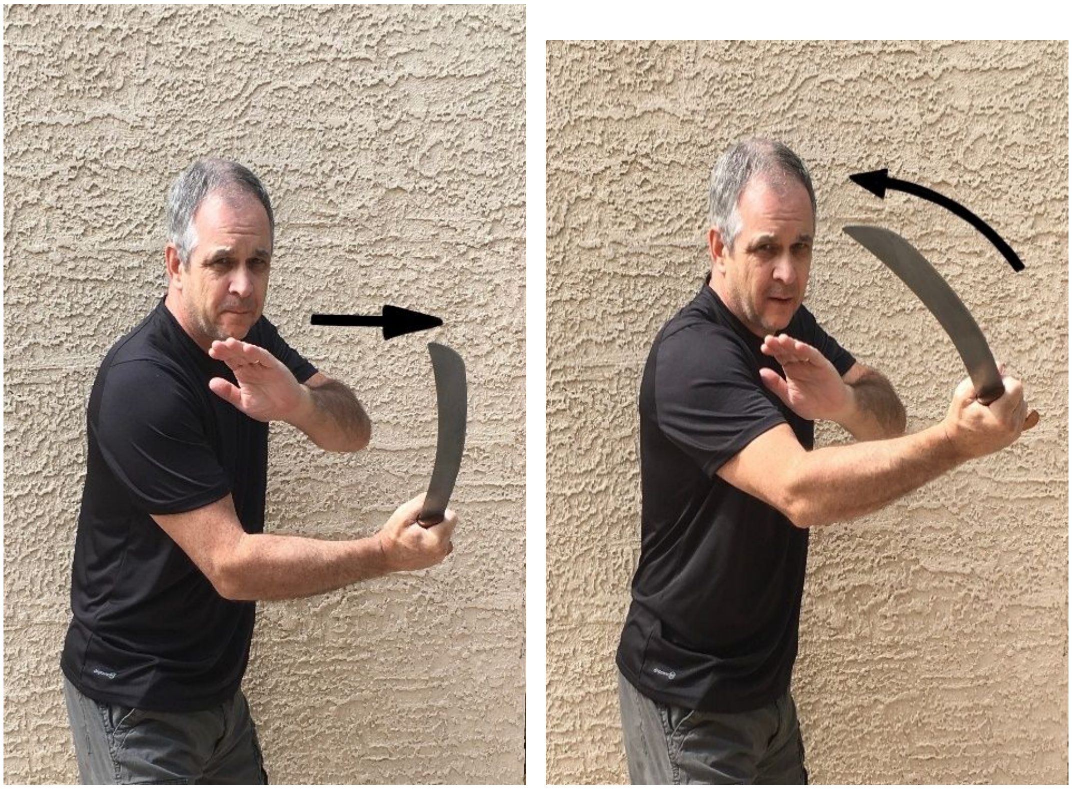


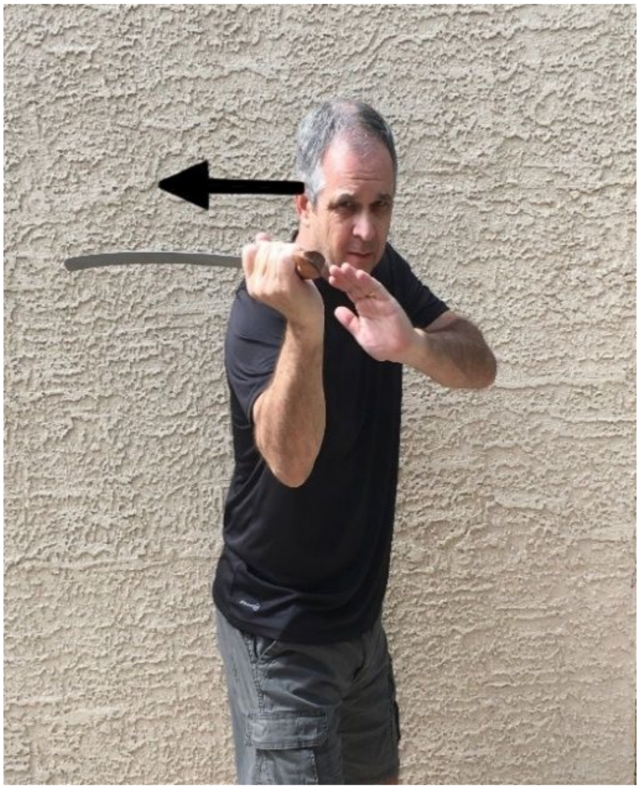


Movement #6

Inside Cut and Outside Hook Thrust

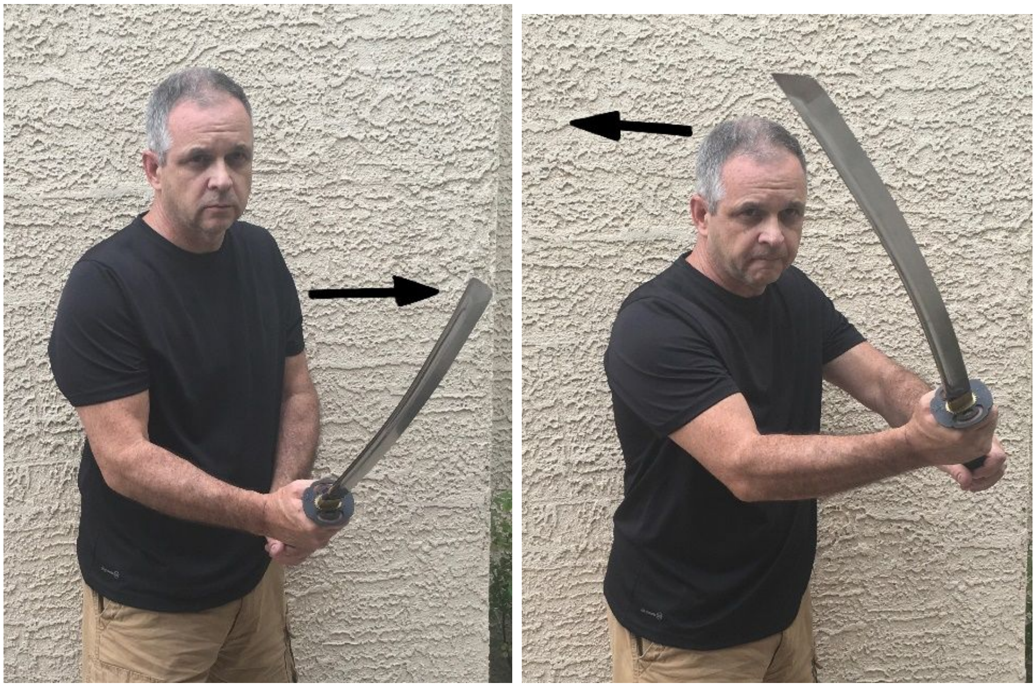
This movement is the exact opposite of the previous drill. Begin by cutting to the inside with your blade. Keep the motion tight with the point of your weapon aimed at your imaginary opponent. Be sure not to over-extend beyond your body with the sword blade. As your blade comes to rest after the inside cut, immediately hook the blade tip inward. The entire movement is performed in one fluid motion from start to finish. Be sure to perform the technique on both sides of your body. The below photos show the movement in motion.

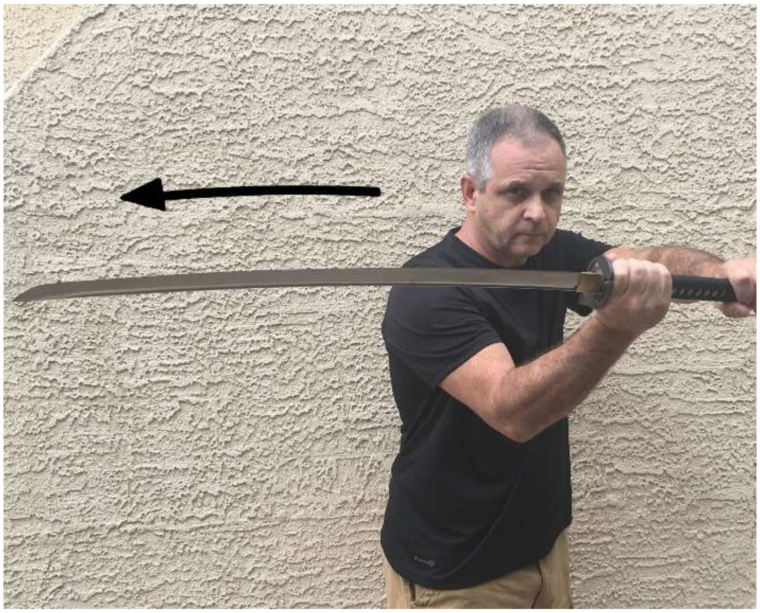




Movement #6- Two-Handed Version

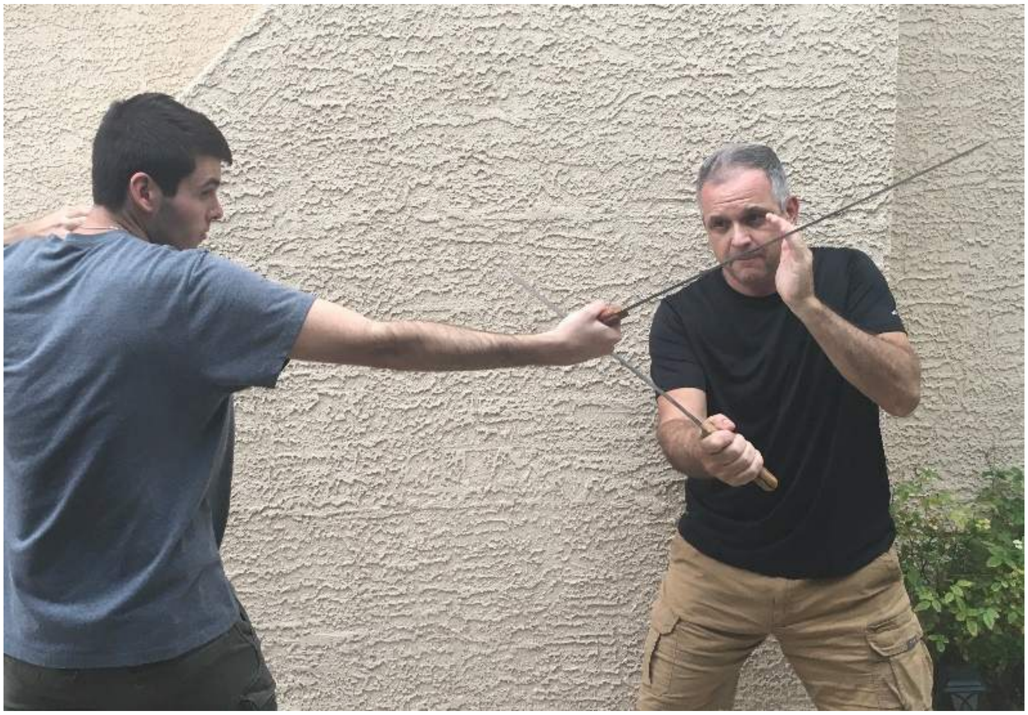
A longer sword requires slightly wider movement to execute the movement. However, even with a longer blade you should make an effort to keep the movements as tight as possible. Remember that overextending creates wasted movement that leaves you open to attack and requires additional time to recover or counterattack. I can't stress this point enough. The below photographs show the inside cut and outside hook thrust with a two-handed sword. As you have probably surmised, any movement that travels towards your center line in an inside movement. A movement that travels away from your centerline is an outside movement.





Movement #6- Application

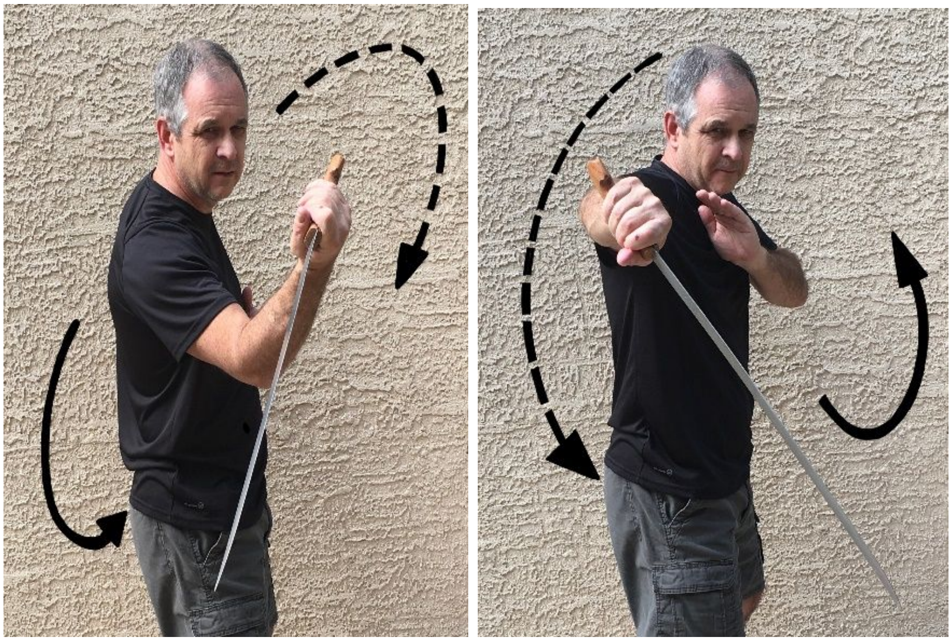
For the practical application of movement #6, the attacker strikes with a cut to the defender’s one o’clock position. The defender uses an inside cut to the attacker’s limb to stop the incoming attack. As he executes the inside cut, the defender angles his body off line and steps forward at a forty-five-degree angle. He keeps his rear hand up to guard his neck and head, incase the attacker’s sword comes in after the cut. Immediately following the inside cut to the attacker’s limb, he moves in and executes an outside hook thrust to his temple. Notice how he checks the attacker’s sword hand as he executes the outside hook thrust. If the initial cut to the attacker’s limb is successful, his sword hand will be disabled and he will more than likely have dropped his blade as a result of his wounds. The below photographs show the application in action.



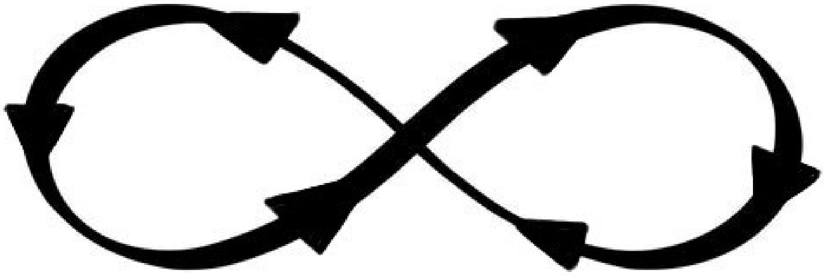
Movement #7

The Upward Figure Eight

The upward figure eight movement is an excellent technique with many applications for both fighting and physical development. The key to this movement is to develop a continuous flowing and uninterrupted figure eight motion. The movement is called the upward figure eight because the blade of your sword starts by cutting upward along a horizontal figure eight shape. To perform the movement from a guard position, rotate your weapon hand upward as you cut with your blade along an upward diagonal line. As the upward cut reaches your head level, rotate the blade in an arc and flow into an upward diagonal cut to the opposite side. When your second cut reaches head level, rotate the blade in an arc once again and repeat your original upward diagonal cut. Continue this cutting motion non-stop and keep the edge of your blade properly aligned for the cuts. Try to make the entire series of movements smooth. In the beginning stages, you can make the upward figure eight motion large, but eventually you will want to tighten it up. The below photographs show the motions of the drill. The solid lines represent the direction of the current cut being executed and the broken arrows represent the direction of the cutting motion you are about to make.



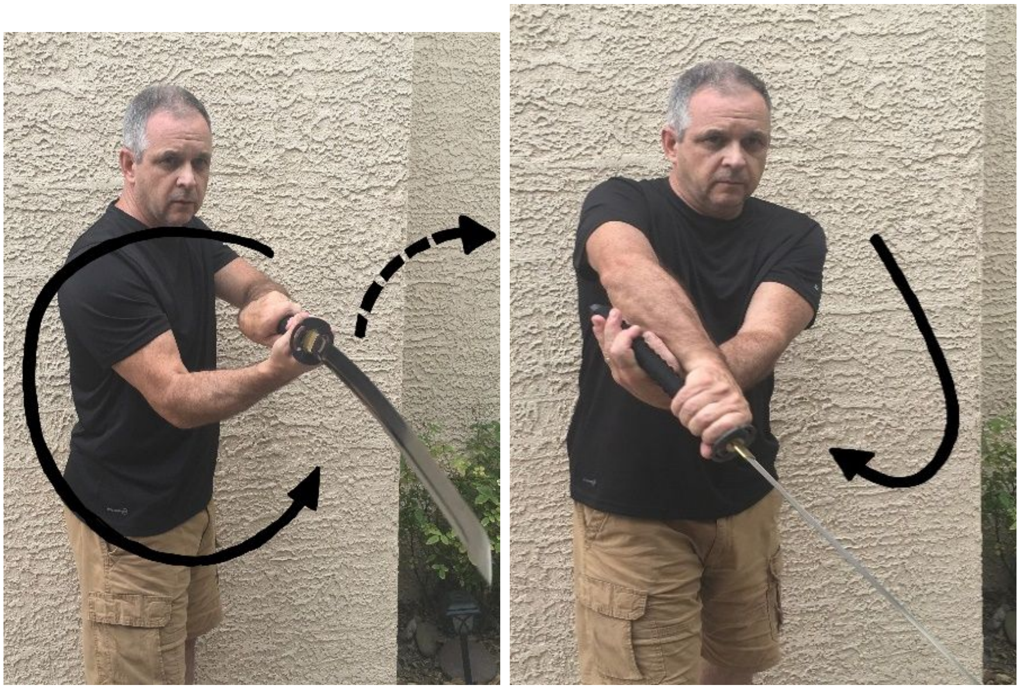
The below diagram shows the complete motion that is made by the sword as it travels along the path of the upward figure eight. This shape could also be thought of as the infinity symbol. The sharp edge of your blade follows the direction of the arrows.



Upward Figure-Eight Motion

Movement #7- Two-Handed Version

The upward figure eight movement is performed in the exact manner with a two handed sword. The only major differences are the need for larger motion due to a longer bladed weapon, and the reduced mobility of a two handed grip. The below photographs show the upward figure eight movement being performed with a two-handed sword.

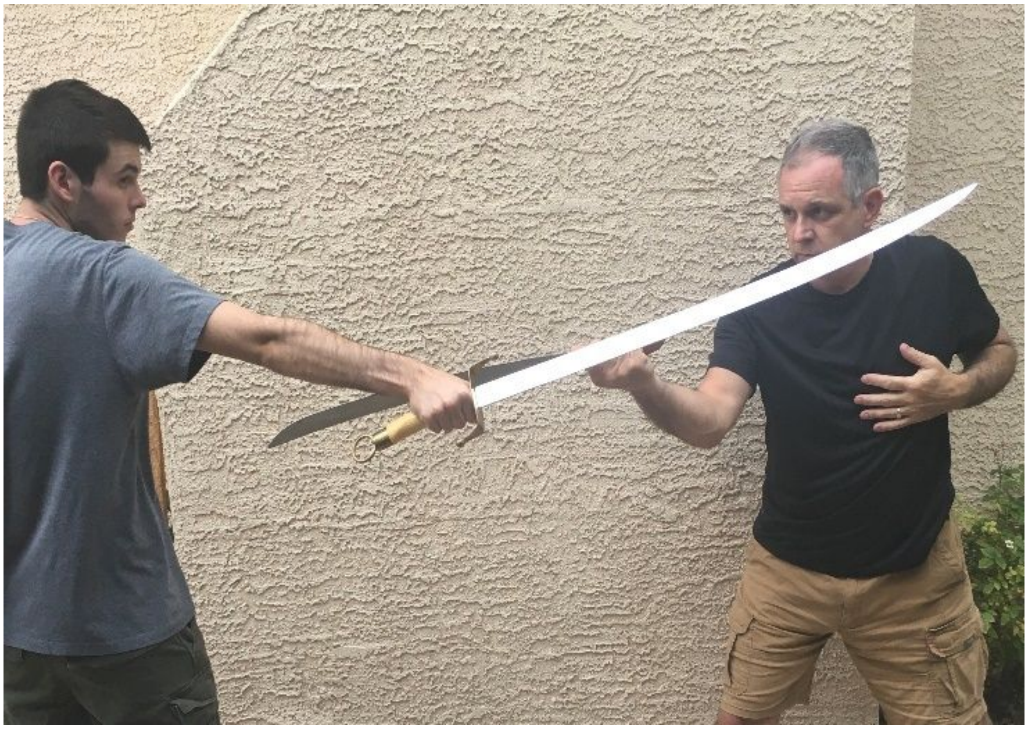


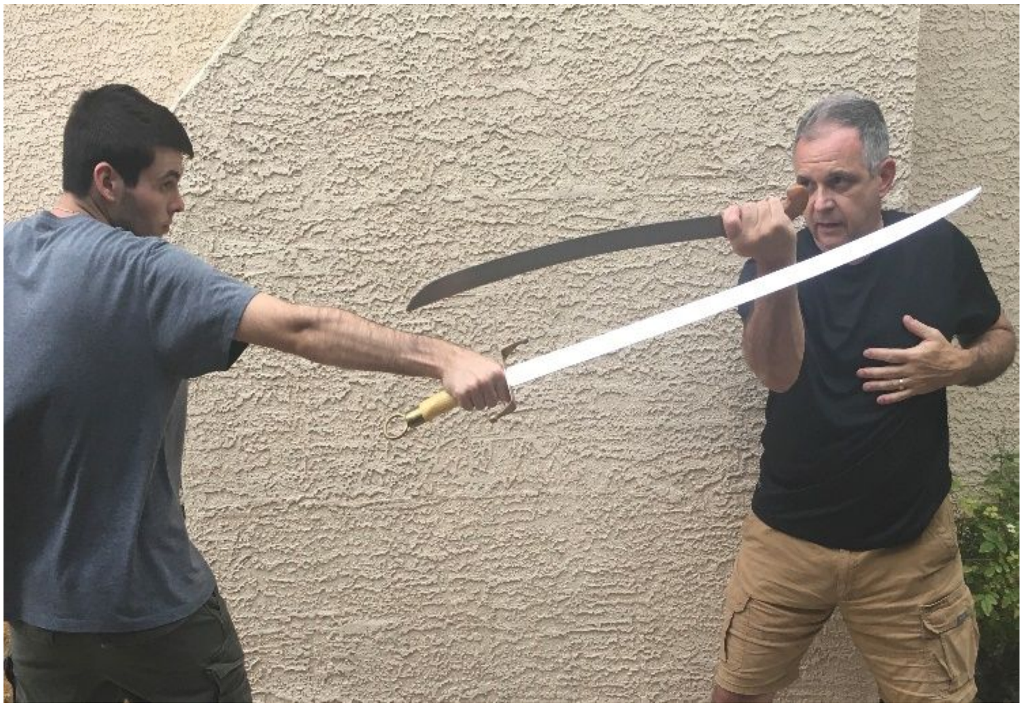
Movement #7- Application

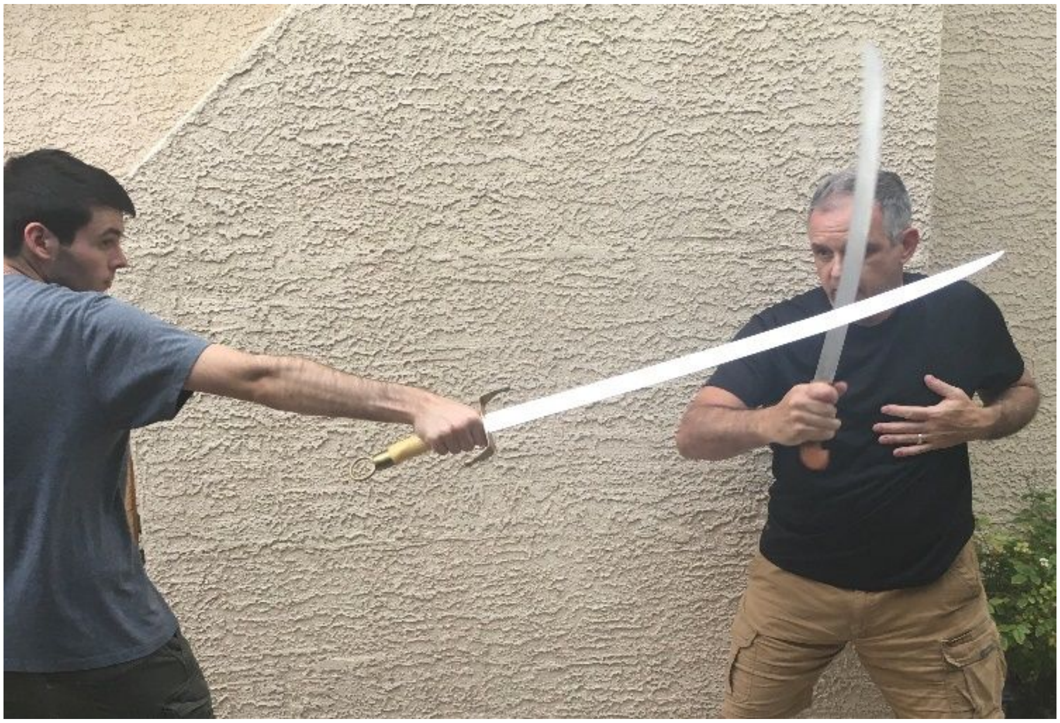
There are numerous applications for the upward figure eight movement. From a combat perspective, it allows you to execute upward cuts to targets from under the line of sight of your opponent. The motions contained within the upward figure eight can be both offensive or defensive in nature. One excellent use of the upward figure eight is the concept of Largo Mano from the Filipino martial arts. This method involves keeping your body out of range of the opponent's sword and attacking his weapon hand as he extends to attack you.

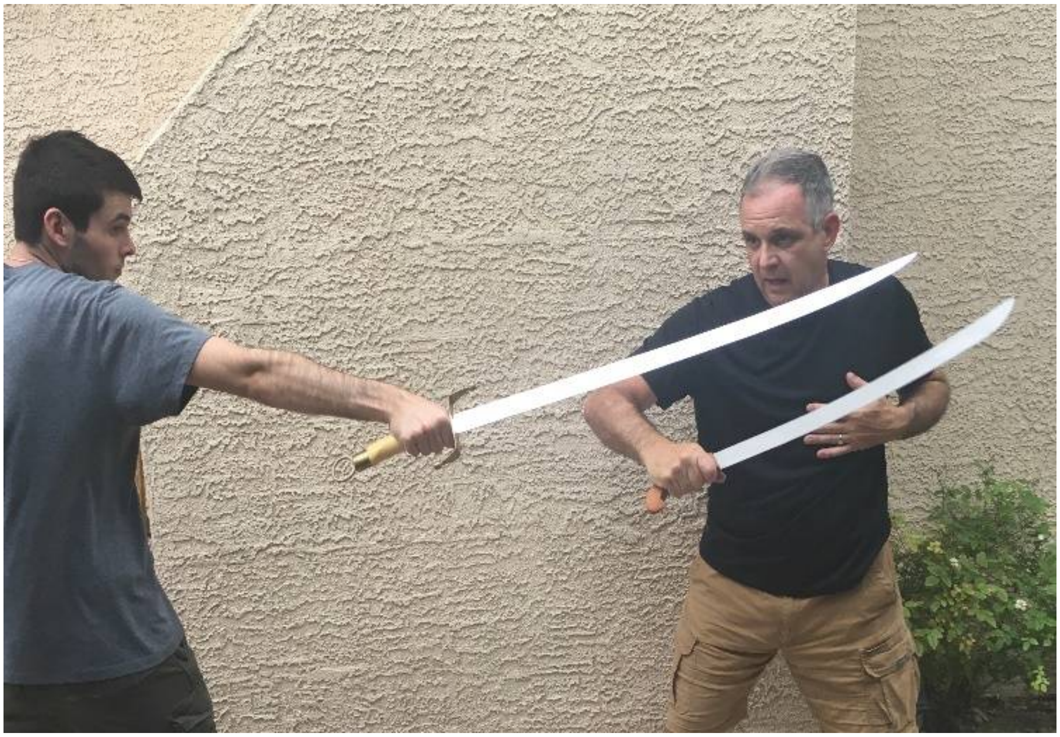
The below series of photos show a simple application of the upward figure eight. As the opponent attacks with a straight thrust, the defender angles off line and executes an upward diagonal cut to his weapon hand. His cut flows through the attacking limb and in a circular motion towards his left side. As the defender's blade moves to the left, it provides cover for a potential counter attack incase the attacker can still hold his sword. The defender continues the circular motion of his blade and executes another upward diagonal cut to the opponent's arm or body.

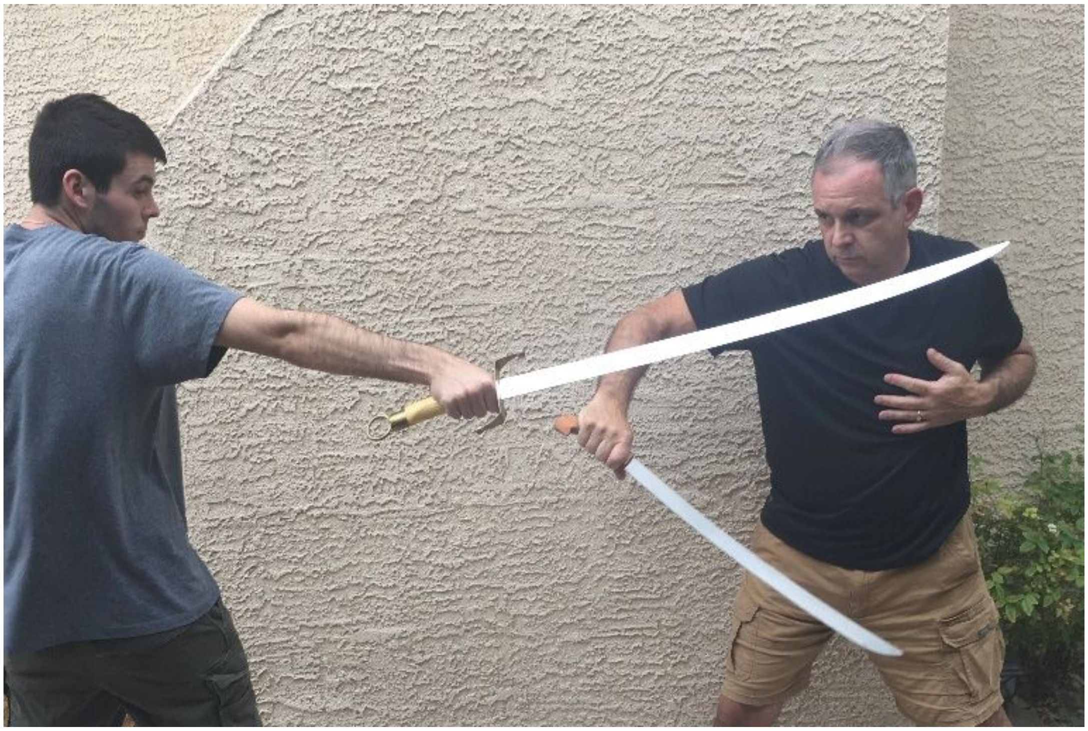
The entire sequence of movements take place in about one second. The cuts and targets are dictated by the actions of the attacker. The important concept here is how the flowing figure eight motion creates a whirlwind of steel that the opponent cannot penetrate.

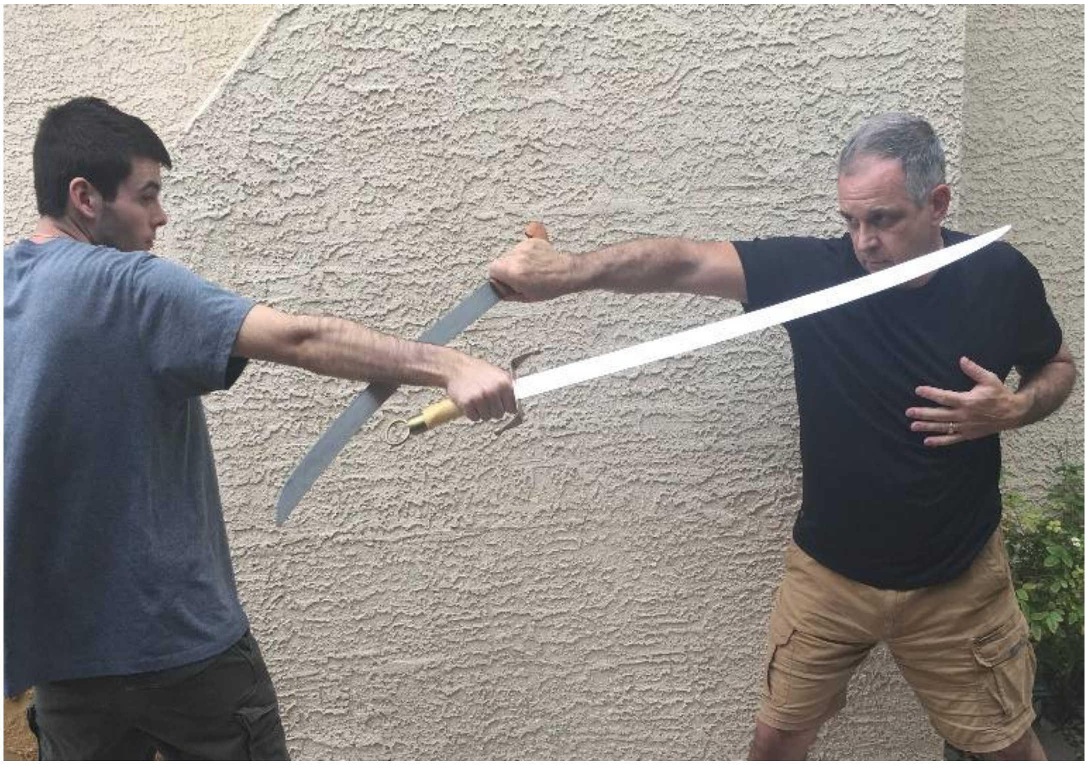












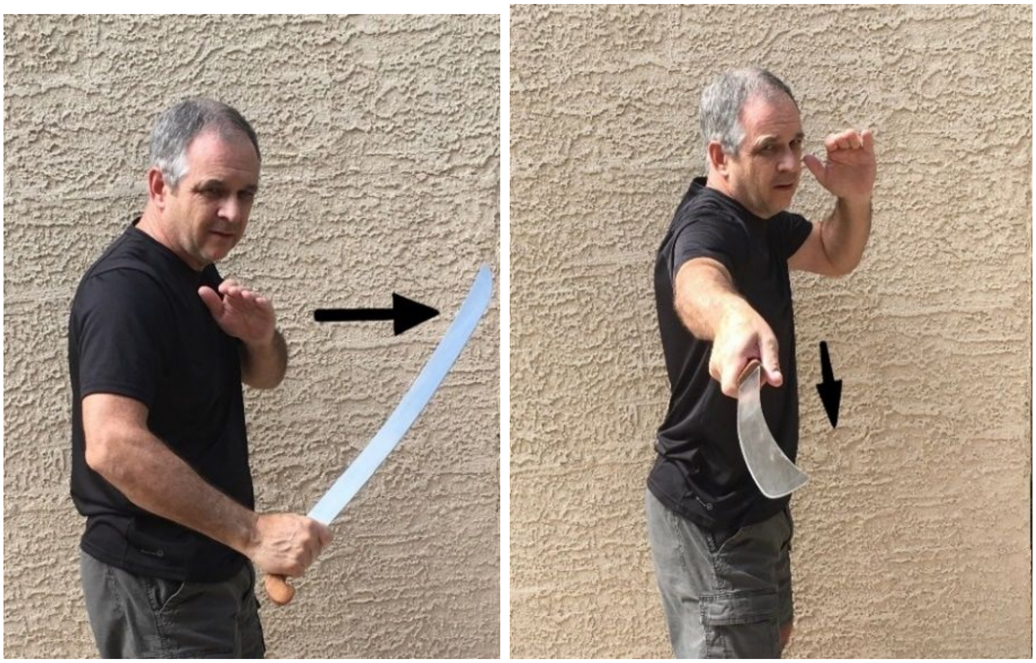
Movement #8

Hack and Thrust

The hack and thrust movement is a quick and effective technique that can generate explosive power. The initial movement of the technique is a short beat or hacking attack normally done to the opponent's blade that is immediately followed with a thrust attack. Unlike the previous movements, this one is not executed in a smooth and flowing manner, but rather in a short hacking burst with lightning speed. As you perform the movement, you should think of a rapid boom-boom cadence. Just like a boxer would parry and throw a quick jab, your hack and follow up thrust are executed in a fast and explosive manner.

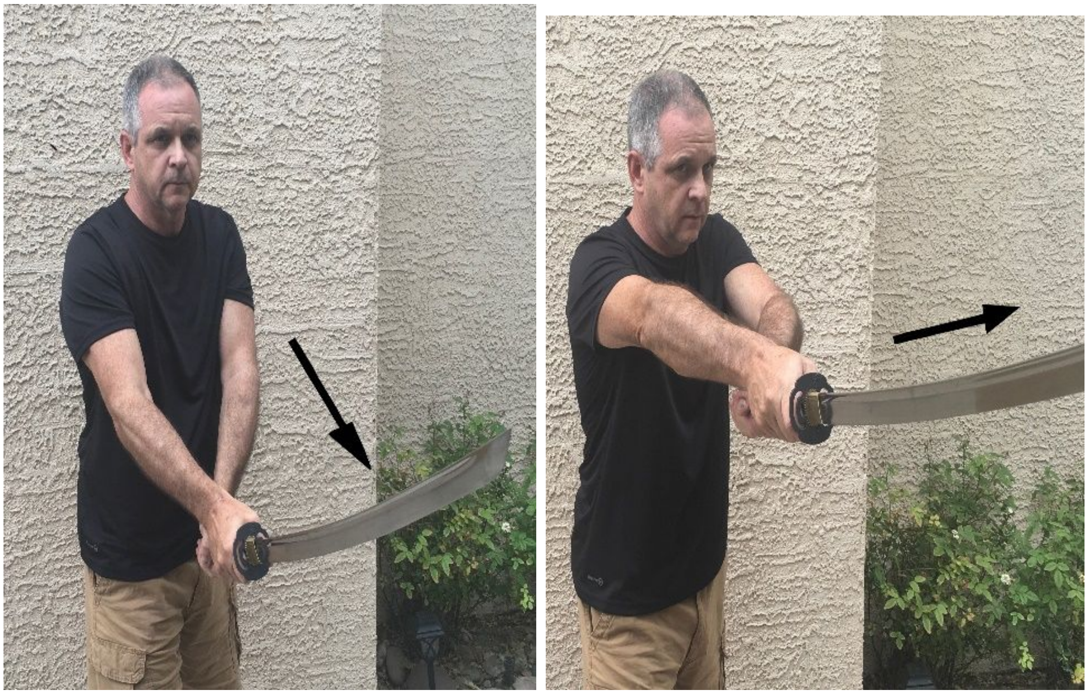
To perform the hack and thrust movement, start in a guard position. Quickly snap your blade forward in a downward hacking motion. Immediately thrust forward with the point of your blade towards the target. With a shorter one-handed sword, the hack can be executed with a quick snap of the wrist. A heavier sword will require the arms to execute the hack. The instant the hack stops, you drive the point of your blade forward for the thrust.

The thrusting attack is normally done by lunging forward and recovering quickly after the strike, but the need for a lunge will depend on the distance you are from the opponent. The below photographs show this drill being executed. The first picture is taken at a forty-five-degree angle to the practitioner for clarity of the hacking motion. It is important to keep your blade between you and the imaginary opponent during this technique.



Movement #8- Two-Handed Version

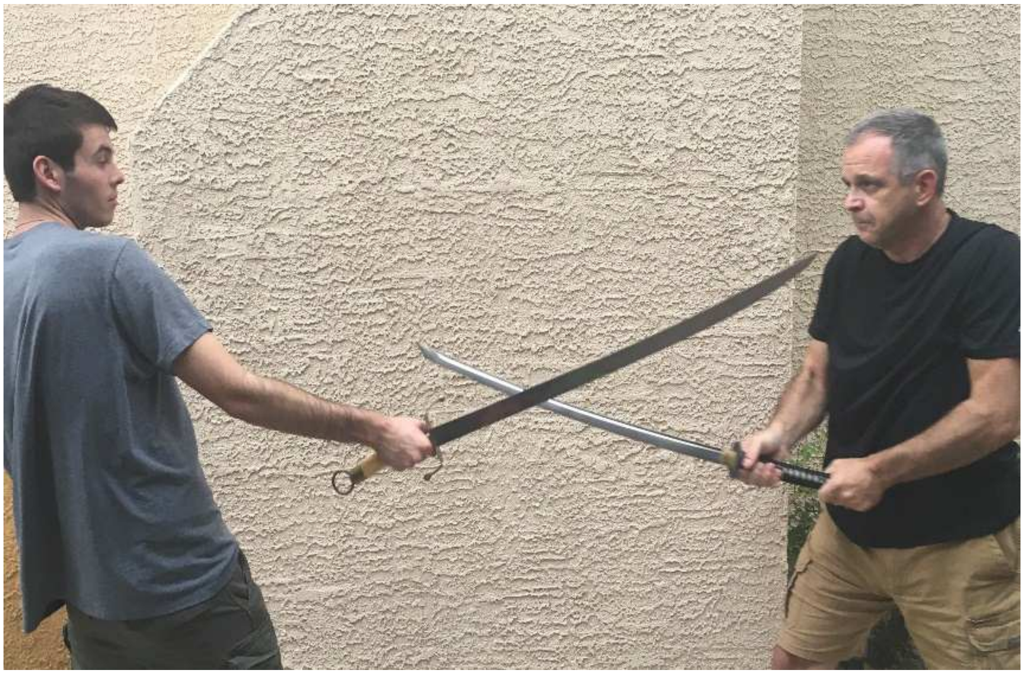
From a guard position, hack downward with the upper two-thirds of your blade. Immediately thrust forward towards the imaginary target. You may also practice this movement by angling your body offline as you execute the thrust. This can be done by stepping forward with the lead leg at a slight forty-five-degree angle as you thrust. Your rear leg then pivots in a semi-circle behind your lead leg. This results in your body being at a forty-five degree angle in relation to the target at the completion of the thrust.

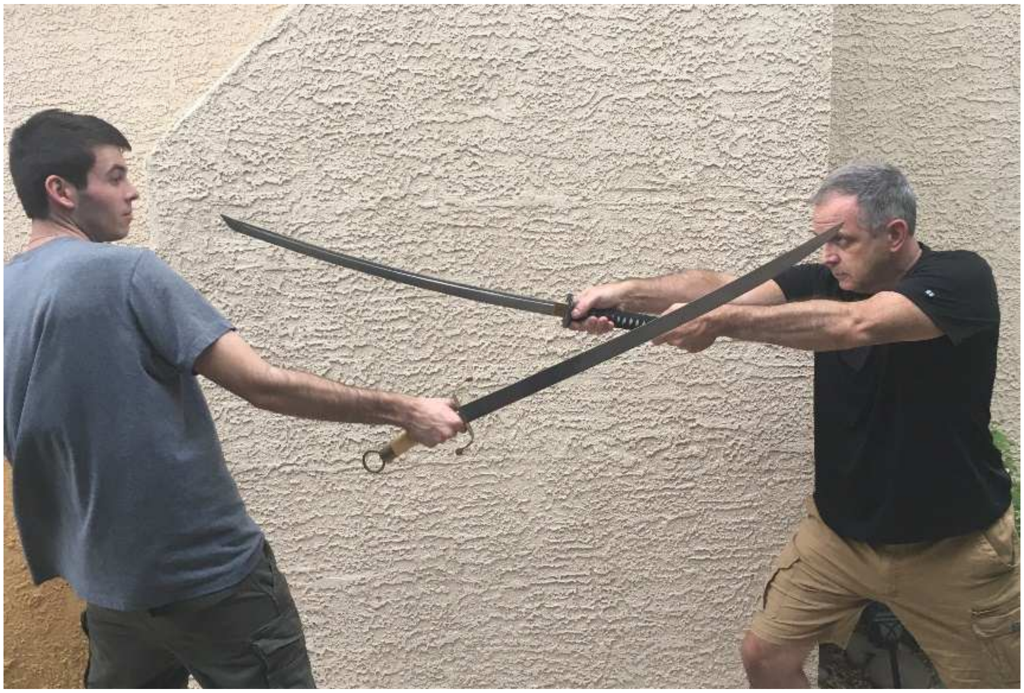


Movement #8- Application

Every sword system that I have studied has a version of the hack and thrust technique. This is probably due to the fact that it is a very simple and natural movement to make with the sword. It is also extremely effective in combat. The initial hacking movement can be used offensively to attack the opponent's sword hand or defensively to stop an incoming thrust. Another common use of the hack is to knock the opponent's guard down and create an opening for the thrust. This technique is commonly called a beat in fencing.

In the below example, the defender uses his sword to knock the opponent's sword down and momentarily create an opening. He immediately thrusts to the opponent's head for the kill. When executing the technique with lunging footwork, it is critical to recover quickly.





Movement #9

Press and Jab

The press and jab is a variation of the previous movement and it illustrates an extremely important concept that applies to all of the techniques in this book. You must be able to adapt and make subtle changes to the movements and techniques based on the type of sword you are using.

I will use a simple analogy to illustrate this point. Let's say you are a guitar player who plays classical guitar. You have studied for years and are very proficient with classical guitar techniques. You attend a party at a friend's house with numerous guests. During the party, one of your friends makes an announcement to the group that you play guitar and asks you to play a song for everyone. All of the people at the party cheer you on. You humbly reply that you didn't bring your guitar with you, to which your friend replies, "no worry, I have a guitar right here!" Your friend proceeds to hand you an electric guitar as he plugs it into an amplifier.

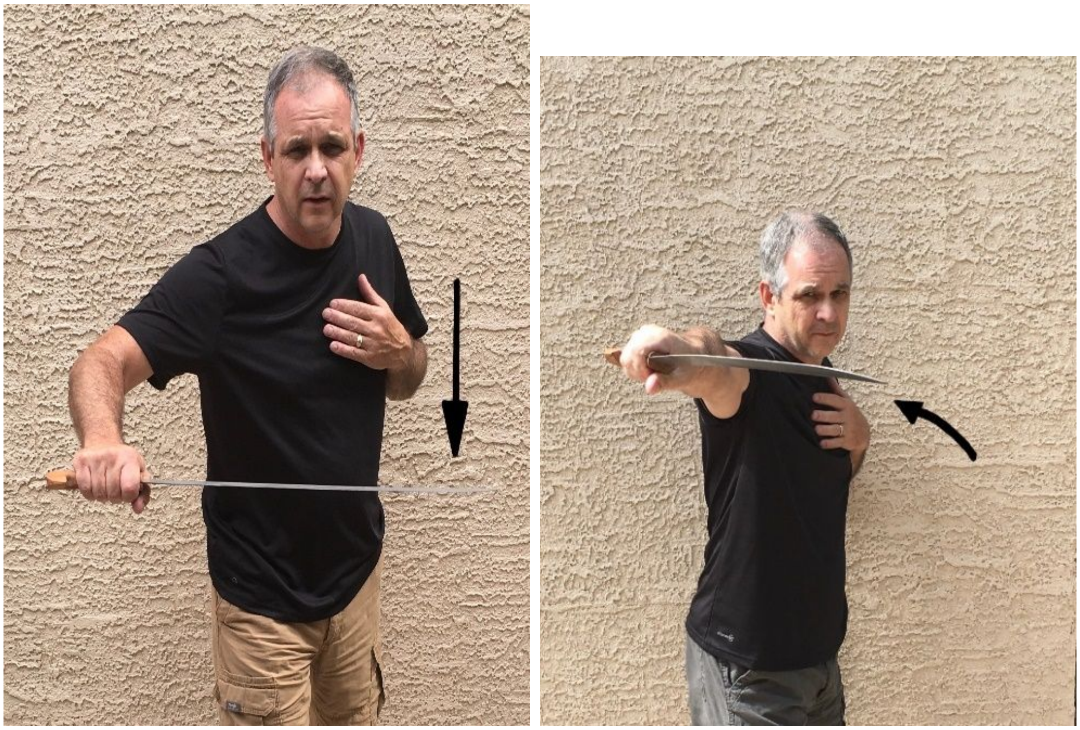
An electric guitar is obviously much different than a classical guitar. It has a thinner neck, metal strings, pick-ups, and switches. The classical guitar on the other hand is much larger, acoustic, and has nylon strings. You have trained for years playing the classical guitar with your fingers, but an electric guitar is often played with a pick. What do you do? Do you say you can't play the electric guitar and disappoint the crowd?

A proficient guitar player can adapt to any instrument they are required to play. The underlining principles of playing the guitar remain the same. You are able to pick up that electric guitar, play some simple chords, finger pick the strings, and make music to please the crowd. To the observers, no one knows the difference. All they see is a talented guitar player in action.

Proficiency with the sword is no different. The basic principles of bladed combat remain the same whether you are using a Bowie knife or a claymore. You must adapt to the strengths and weaknesses of your weapon. In ancient times on the battlefield, your sword might break or become damaged. You might have to pick up a weapon from a dead combatant and continue to fight. Adaptability is essential in all aspects of combat, including sword fighting.

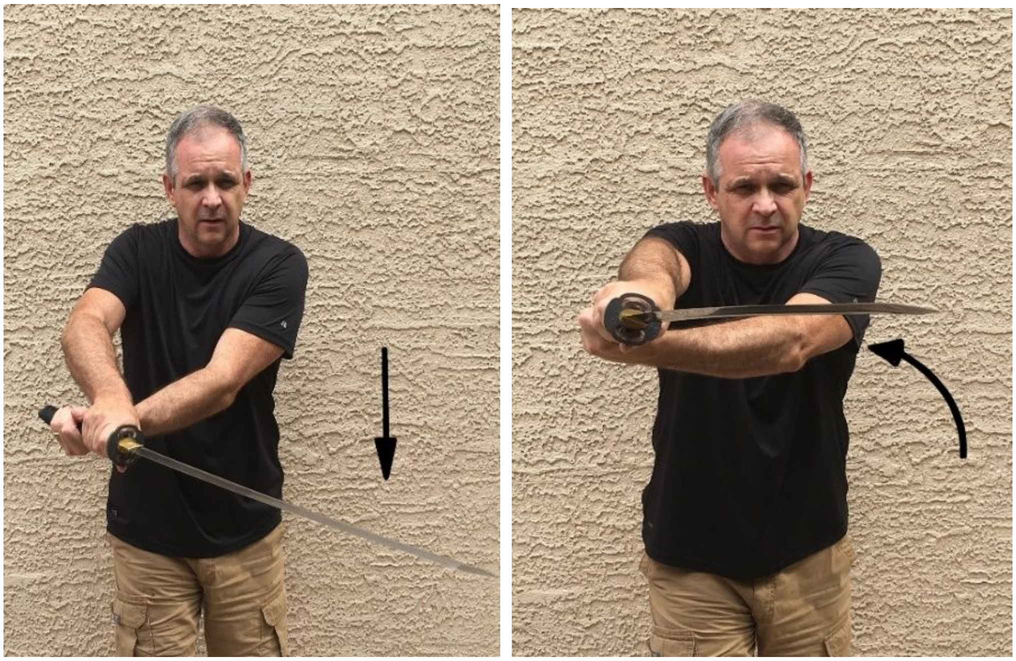
In the hack and thrust movement, we capitalized on the fact that our sword was designed for thrusting attacks. In this technique we are assuming the sword we are using is not designed for thrusting. With just a minor adjustment, we change the attack from a thrust to a jab. We also modify the hack technique into a press. By using the flat side of the blade we can apply pressure on the opponent's sword to control it and create an opening for attack. The press can be a done in a checking motion or as a parry.

To execute the press and jab movement, start from a guard position. Press down with the side of your sword in front of your body and immediately strike forward with the sharp edge of your blade in a quick jabbing manner. The jab is a very fast technique that strikes out and retracts back instantly. The blade makes contact with the upper edge near the tip. The below pictures show the press and jab movement being performed. Remember, no wasted motion!



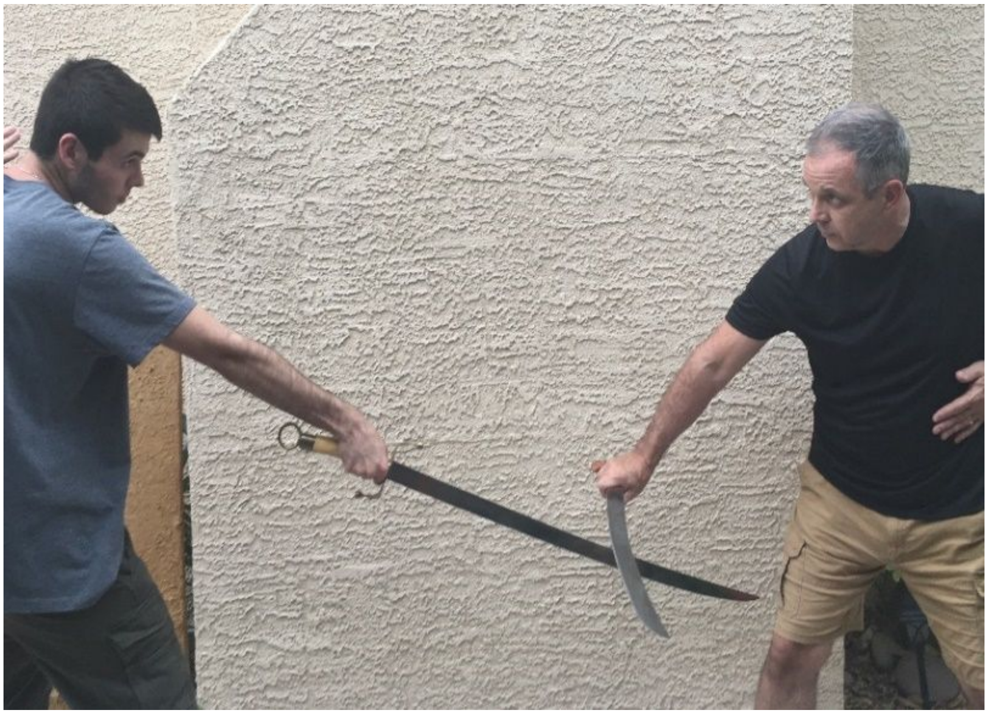
Movement #9- Two-Handed Version

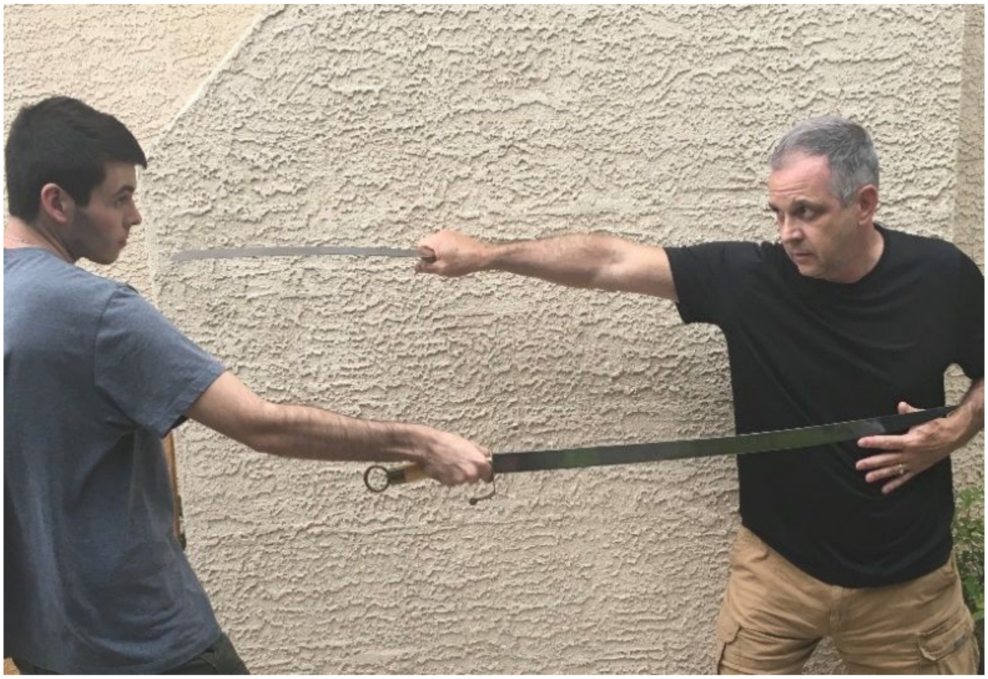
With the two-handed sword, press down firmly with the flat edge of the blade and immediately strike directly forward with the jab. Think of the jab as a short chopping attack. It is important to move directly into the jab from the press without retracting the blade or telegraphing your intentions. It is also extremely important to recover to the guard position immediately.



Movement #9- Application

As the opponent attacks with a low thrust, the defender stops the attack by angling his body offline and pressing downward on his sword blade. Without any hesitation, he jabs to the opponent's face with the blade. The jab is a quick snapping attack aimed at blinding the opponent or causing a disruptive wound. It is not intended to be a power shot, although with sufficient practice, it can generate a great deal of power from the momentum of the snap. A good mental picture to have when performing this technique is to think of a sushi chef chopping up raw fish on a chopping block. The wrist plays a major role in the snapping power that is generated in both the hack and the jab. The below photos show the technique being applied.





Movement #10

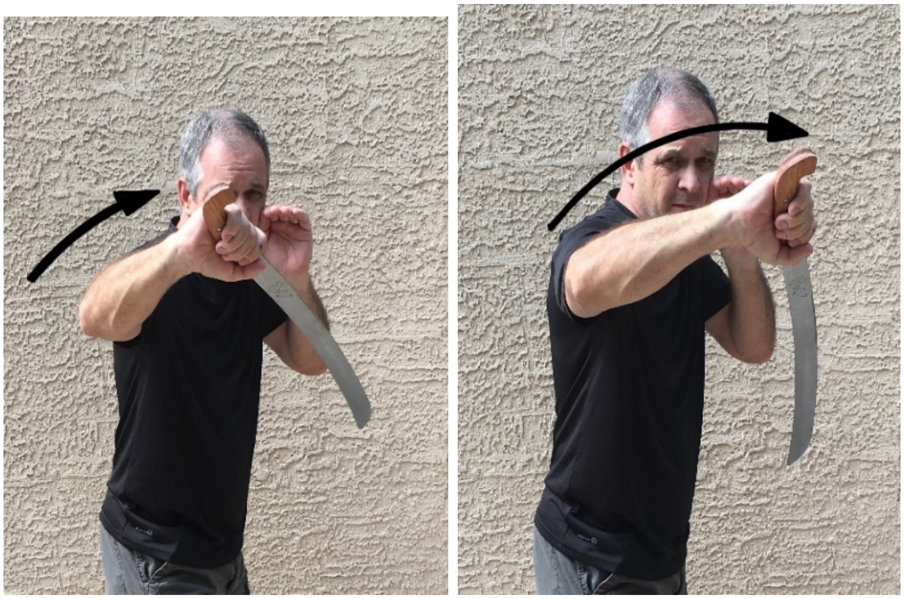
Butt Strokes (Forward and Reverse)

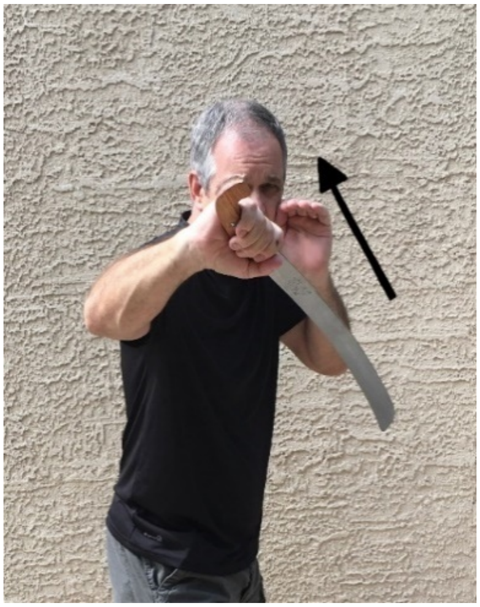
The purpose of this movement is to add an element of close range fighting into your sword system. The movement focuses on two primary methods of striking with the butt of your weapon. Obviously this is a technique that can only be used at a very close distance to your opponent.

You should understand that it can be very difficult to control the range and distance of your enemy during an encounter. The opponent may crash into you, or launch a surprise attack before you are able to fully draw your weapon. In some cases your blade may be trapped or bound by the opponent's sword and the butt of the weapon is your only option. In other circumstances you may have closed the distance in an effort to neutralize or disarm the opponent's sword. In all of these cases, the ability to launch an attack with the butt of the weapon could be a true life saver.

To perform the movement, start from a guard position. Quickly bring the handle of your sword up and execute a forward strike with the butt of the sword. This strike is executed in almost the exact same manner as a boxer would throw a hook punch to the opponent's jaw. Contact is made to the target with the tip of the sword handle. Strike through your imaginary target with the handle, and then flow into a reverse butt stroke.

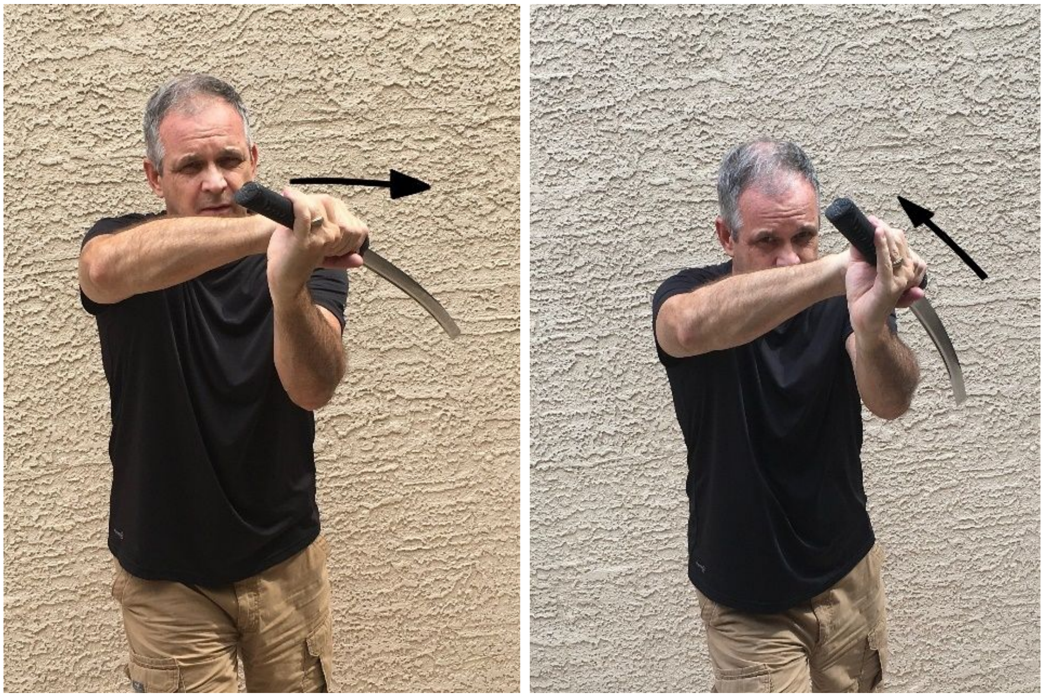
This technique travels back towards the target in more of a straight line, similar to how you would execute a hammerfist strike to the opponent's right temple. The two butt strokes are executed in a rapid and fluid manner. The below photographs show the forward and reverse butt strokes being performed.





Movement #10- Two-Handed Version

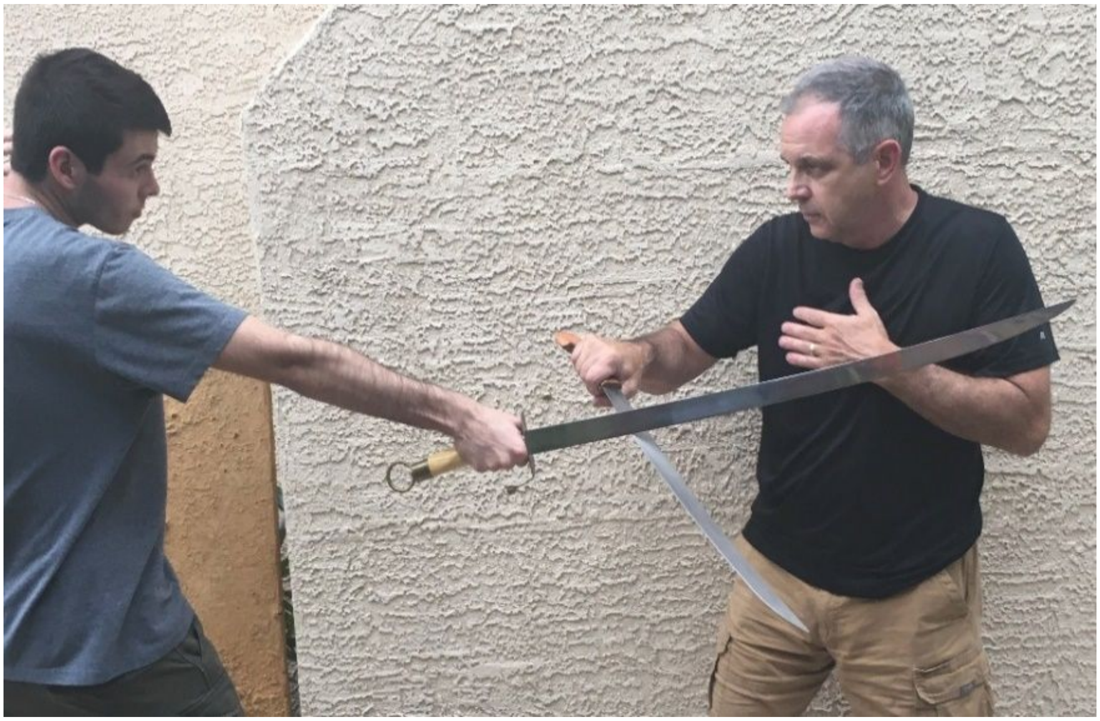
Using the two-handed sword, step in and execute a forward butt stroke with the handle of the sword. You then immediately reverse the motion and strike with a reverse butt stroke to the imaginary target. With the two-handed sword, you can execute these butts stokes with both hands on the sword handle or with only your strong hand on the sword handle. Just because you are using a larger sword designed for use with two hands doesn't mean you shouldn't practice using one hand on the weapon during training. A real situation could require you to release your grip with one hand for various reasons including to grab, strike, parry, or due to injury.

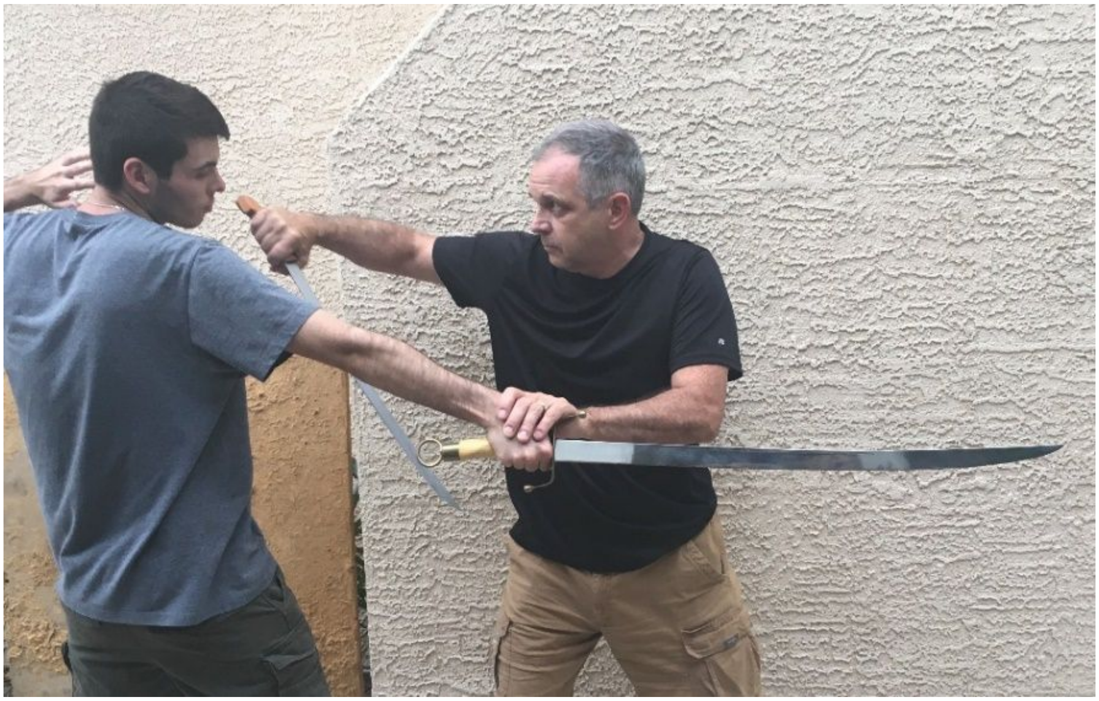


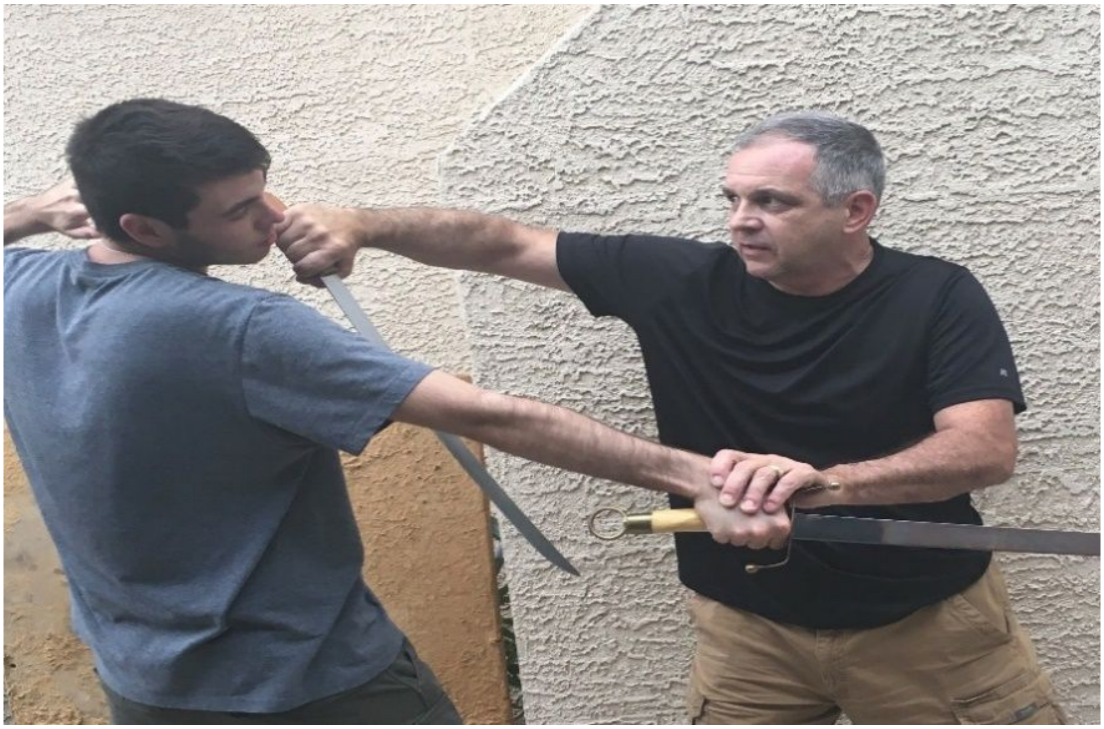
Movement #10- Application

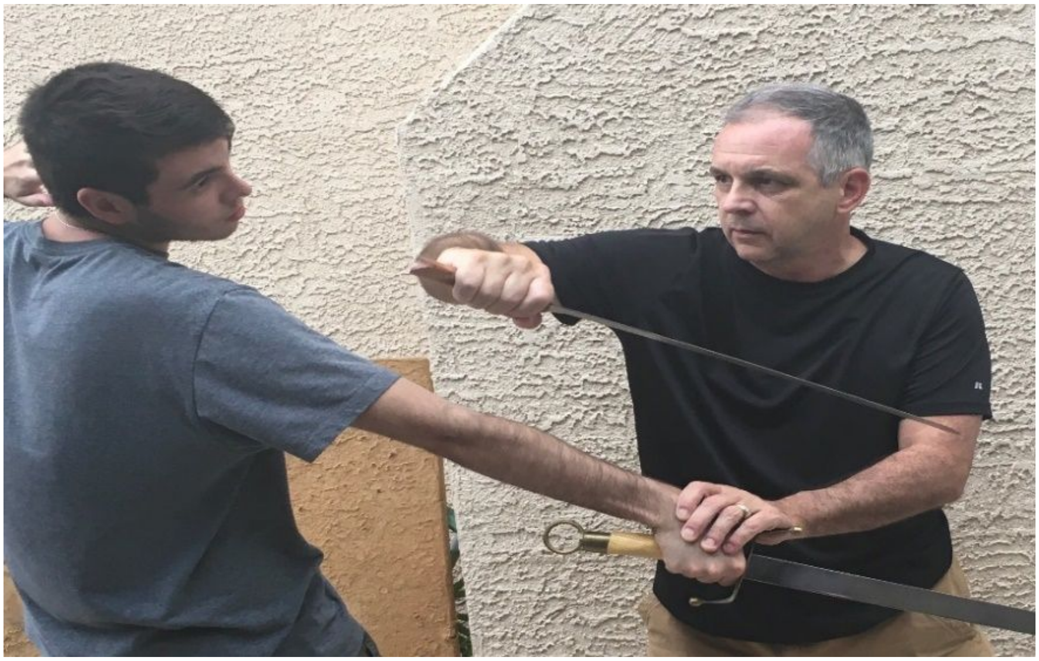
One possible application of the butt stroke is shown below. When the opponent attacks with a straight thrust, the defender executes an inside parry with his blade as he enters in to close the distance.

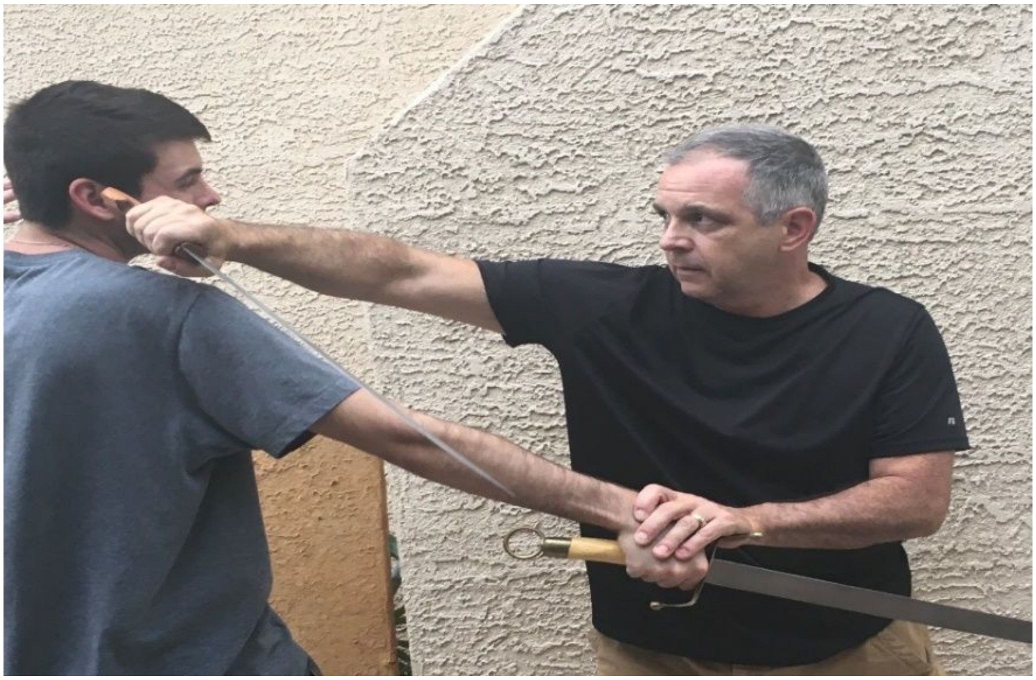
He then traps the opponent’s weapon hand as he delivers a forward butt stroke to the opponent’s jaw. While maintaining control of the opponent’s weapon hand, the defender flows into a reverse butt stroke to his jaw. From this position the defender can disarm the opponent, execute a lock, or continue to attack with close range strikes and cuts. He may also choose to disengage and finish the opponent from longer range with the blade. Each situation will be different and will dictate a different response depending on the circumstances. Being able to think on your feet, read the opponent’s intentions, and decide the best strategy based on the opponent’s actions are all crucial skills for a sword practitioner to possess. The best way to develop these attributes is by sparring and applying the movements against a training partner who is resisting. The common term used these days for this concept is to “pressure test” your techniques.











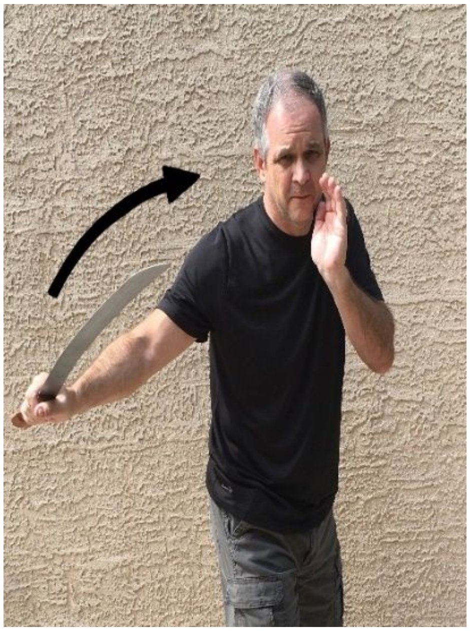
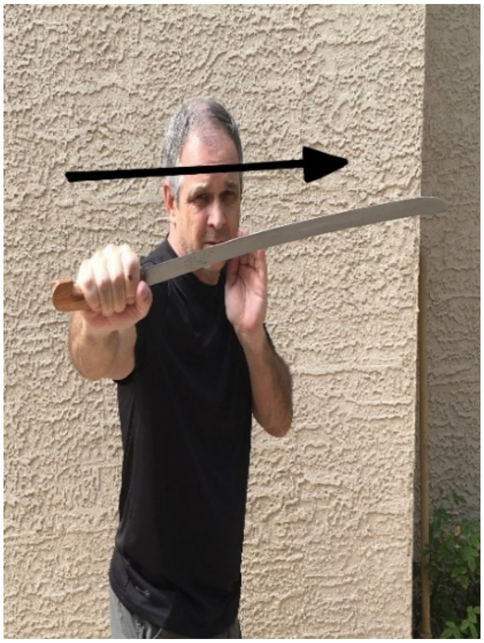
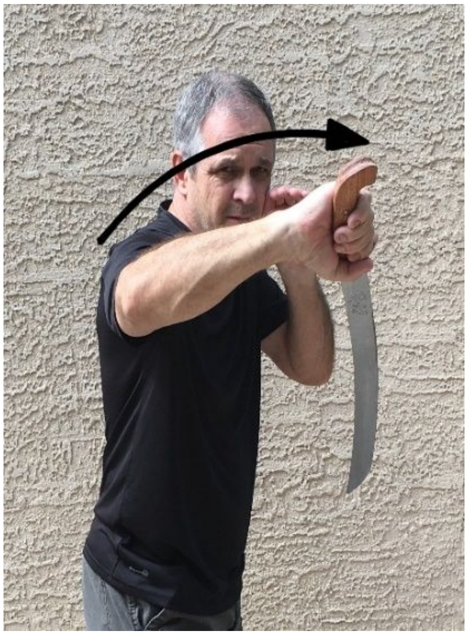
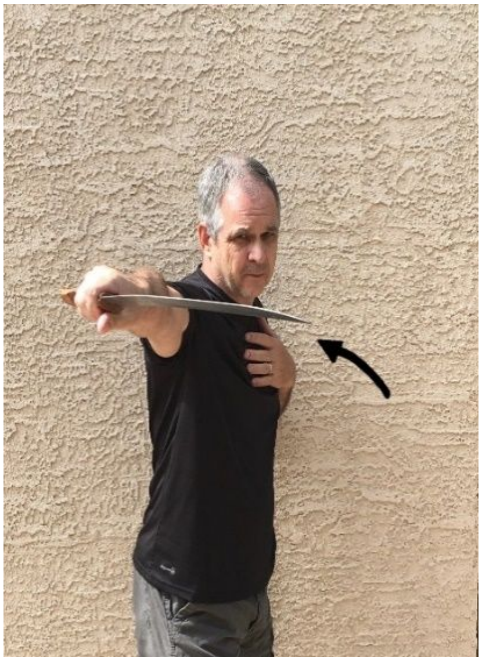
Another common application of the butt stroke is to execute it directly from the draw of the sword. This method was often used with the longer sword to respond to a surprise attack. As the opponent charges in, draw your sword and execute the butt stroke as the blade clears the scabbard. You then immediately transition into follow up attacks to finish the opponent. The butt of your sword can also be used at close range to trap the opponent's weapon hand and prevent him from drawing his sword. As with all of the drills, there are many applications to explore as your sword skills improve.

Movement #11

Inside Hook Thrust, Forward Butt Stroke, Outward Slash

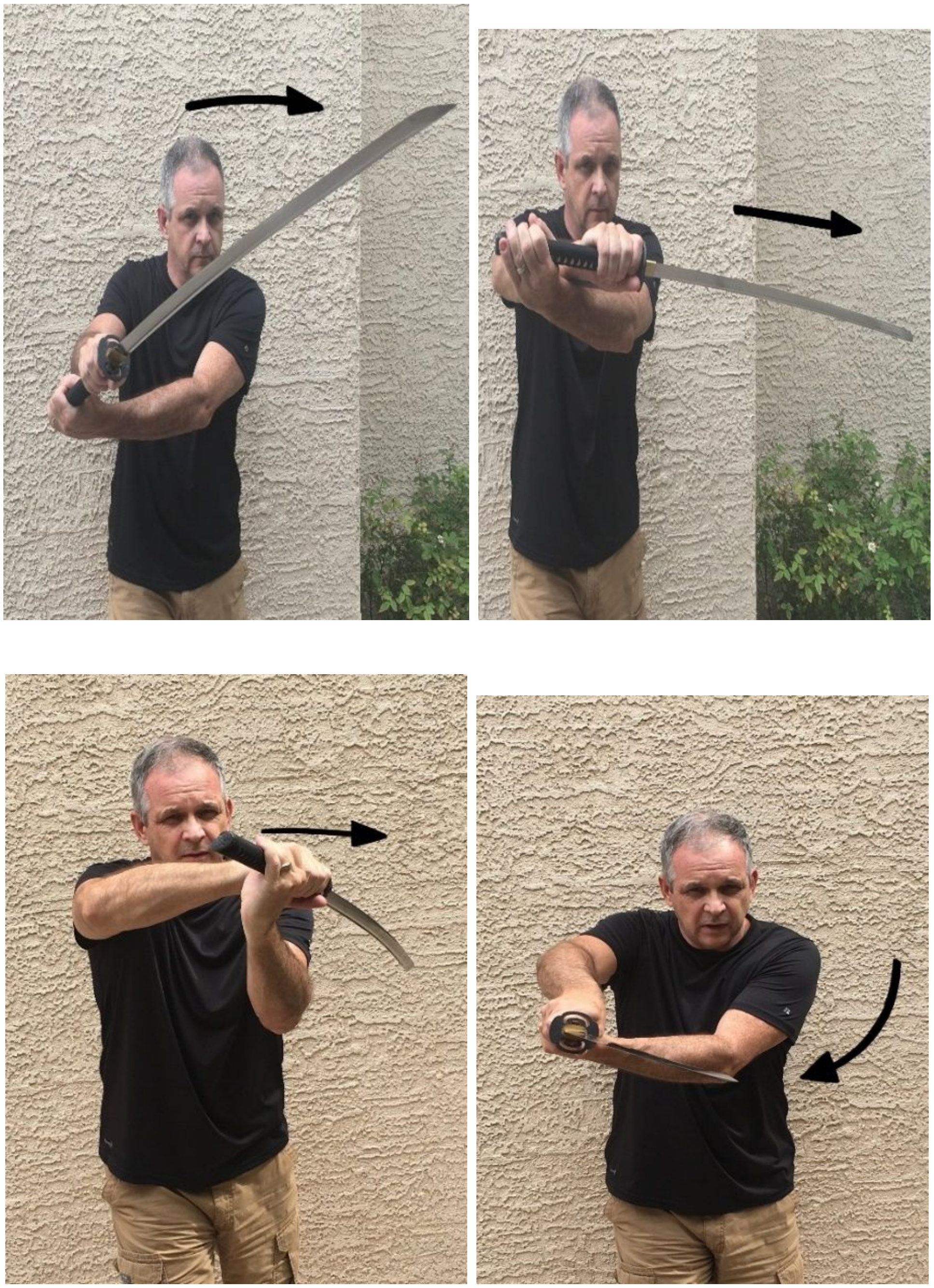
This movement combines several elements from the previous movements for two important purposes. First, to develop the ability to spontaneously flow between various ranges of combat, and second, to show how you can create combinations of techniques contained within the movements in the heat of the moment. This movement will require you to transition between medium-range, close-range, and long-range attacks. To perform the movement, begin in a guard position. Turn your wrist outward while keeping the point of your sword aimed at the imaginary opponent. From this position execute an inside hook thrust. This is a medium range attack. As the hook thrust passes through the target, step in and flow directly into a forward butt stroke attack. This is a close-range attack. Immediately following the forward butt stroke, execute an outward slash without hesitation. This is a long-range attack. The three attacks flow together into one fluid series of movements that together cover three ranges of combat.

When you first learn this movement, you can perform it while standing stationary. Once you have reached a level of proficiency with the sword movements you will need to add some basic footwork to make the techniques more functional. To add basic footwork, perform the drill as follows. The initial hook thrust is executed with a body pivot to angle offline. You will then step in as you execute the butt stroke attack. The final outward slash is made as you lunge backwards. This basic footwork pattern will allow you to adjust your distance for the range of the opponent and the type of attack being executed. At an advanced stage, you should experiment with other types of footwork patterns such as triangle stepping, circling, and body pivoting. Finally, you could perform these movements by keeping the lower body relatively in place and swaying your upper body forward and backward to adjust for changes in range. The below photographs show the movement being executed.

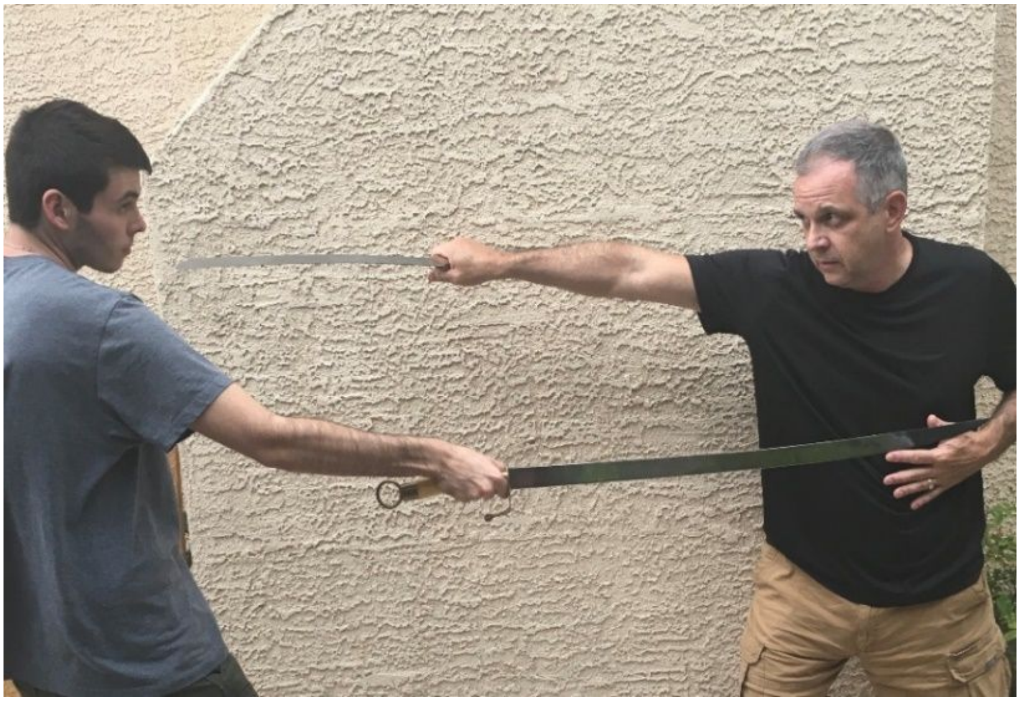
Movement #11- Two-Handed Version

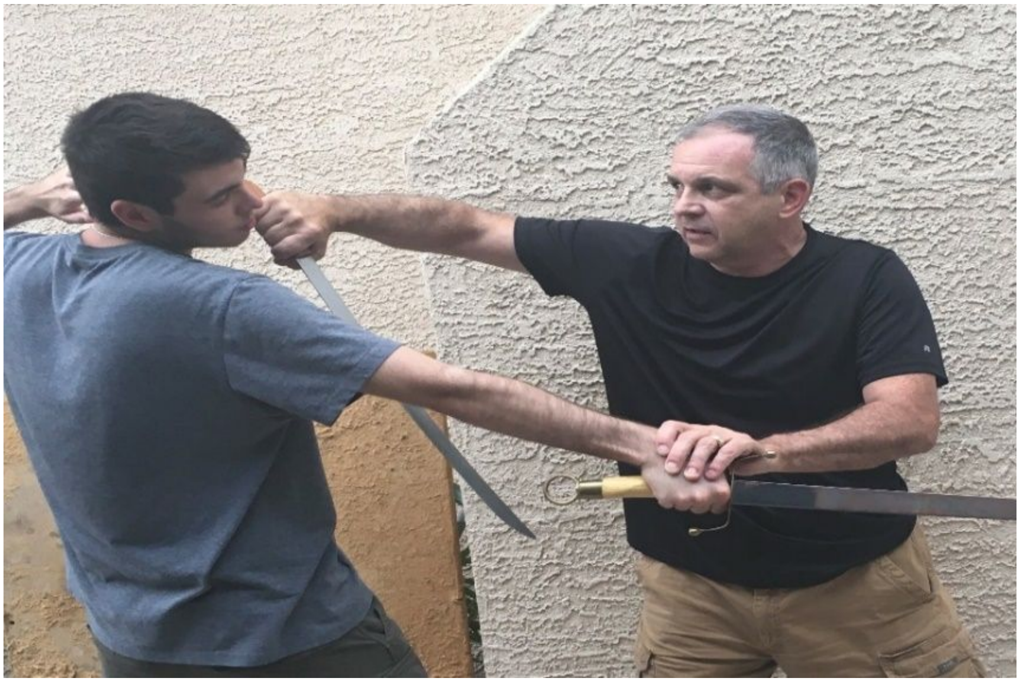
From a guard position with the two-handed sword, execute an inside hooking thrust. Without a pause in motion, step in as you flow into a forward butt stroke attack with the pommel of the sword. Step backwards as you execute an outside slash with the blade. As we have mentioned, footwork is critical in this movement due to the changes in range. With a longer sword, the footwork and body mechanics become even more prominent.

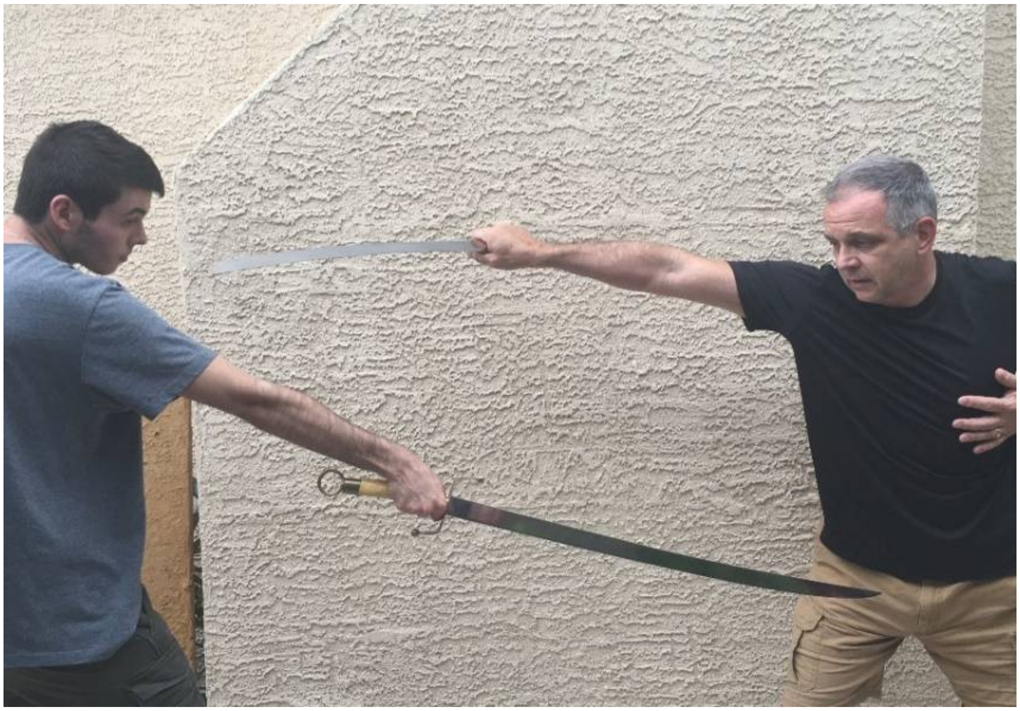


Movement #11- Application

In the below series of photographs, the opponent approaches in a guard position. As he moves forward to engage, the defender steps offline and executes a quick inside hook thrust to his head or neck. As soon as his blade contacts the target and the opponent reacts, the defender steps in deep and executes a forward butt stroke with the pommel of the sword. He checks the opponent's weapon hand as he enters in and delivers the strike. From this position, the opponent steps back in an effort to retreat. At this point the defender launches a quick outward slash to finish the engagement. As you can see, the movements and actions of the attacker will dictate the type of technique the defender must use to attack and defend.



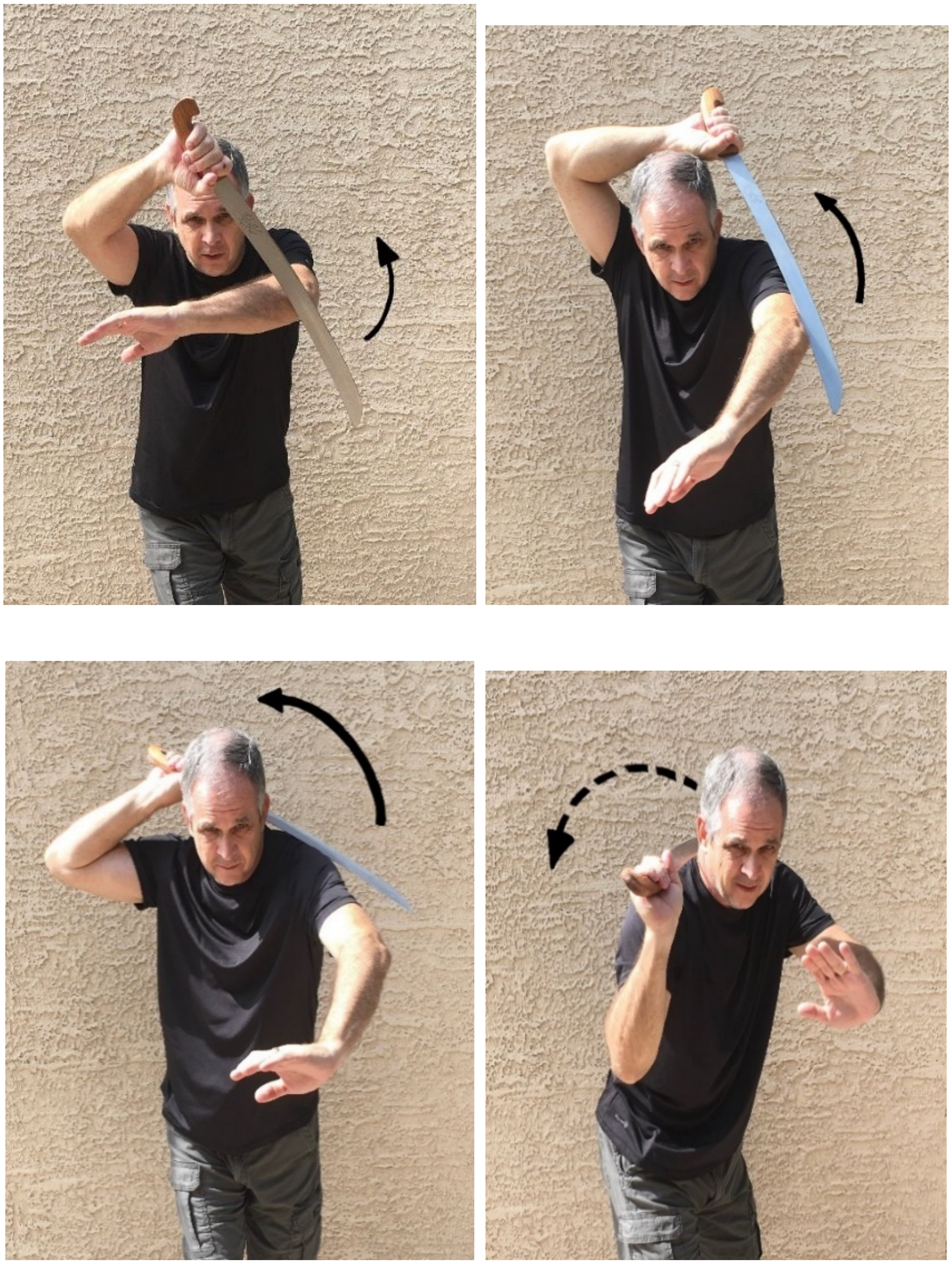


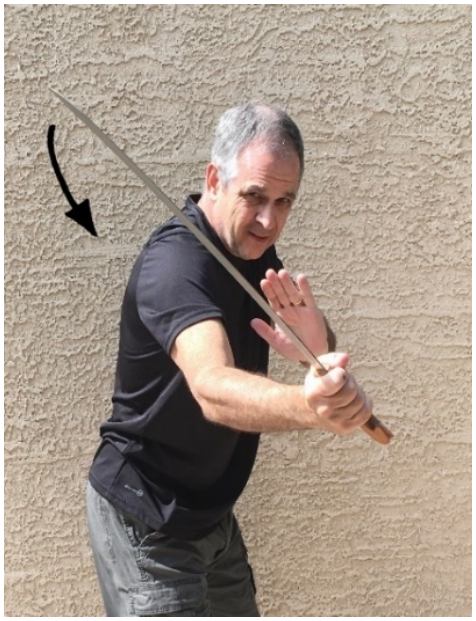


Movement #12

Umbrella Cover and Downward Diagonal Slash

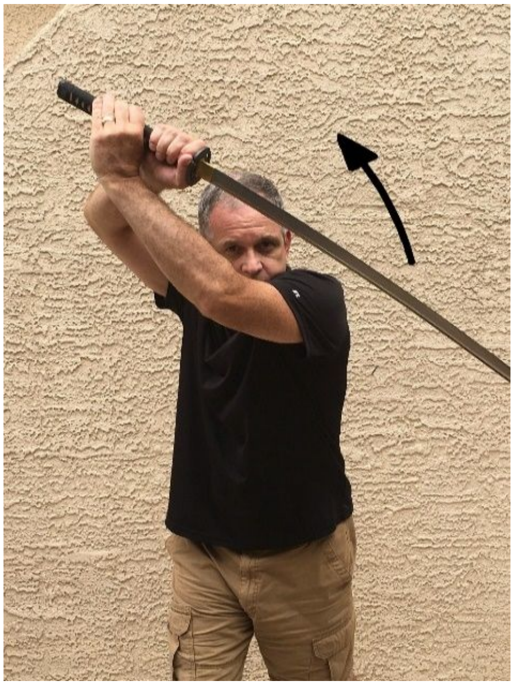
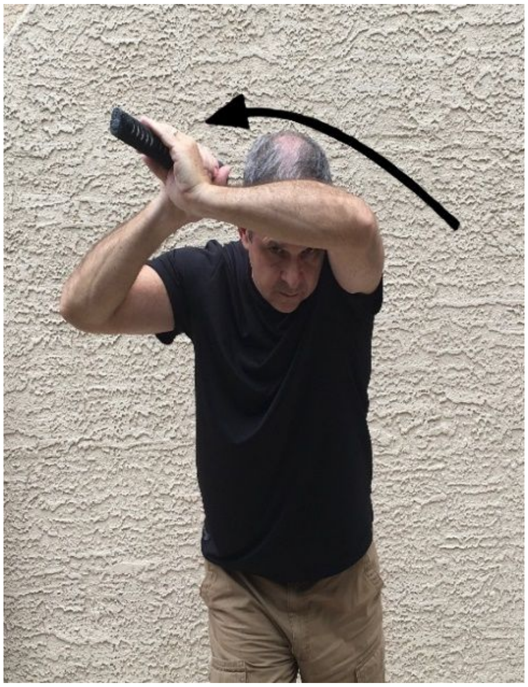
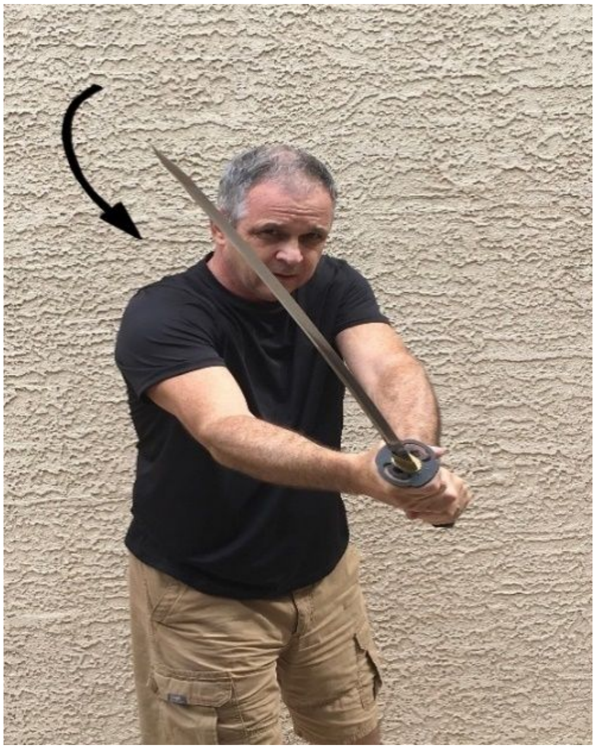
The umbrella cover is a defensive technique that is used to protect the head and the back of the neck while making entry against an opponent. It is also a very deceptive motion that can be used to recover from an overextended attack and flow into a secondary cut with the blade. Finally, the motion of bringing the blade around the back of the neck can also simulate a back draw from a scabbard. To perform this movement from a guard position, bring the blade up towards your head level in a manner similar to executing the roof cover which was discussed in a previous movement. Your rear hand remains inside of the blade and is used to guard or check the opponent as you close the distance. As the sword reaches the top of your head, duck under the blade and allow it to rotate around the back of your neck. Keep the motions tight and actually touch the back of your neck with the blade as it rotates around. Your weapon hand travels over your head and around to a position near your ear as you rotate the blade. When the blade rotates around your neck it comes to rest on your shoulder. Use your shoulder to assist with propelling the sword blade forward and into a downward diagonal slash. The below series of photographs show the umbrella cover and downward diagonal slash being performed. The description sounds complicated on paper, but it is actually very simple in execution. Pay close attention to the photographs and with a little practice you should have no trouble performing this movement in a smooth and fluid manner.





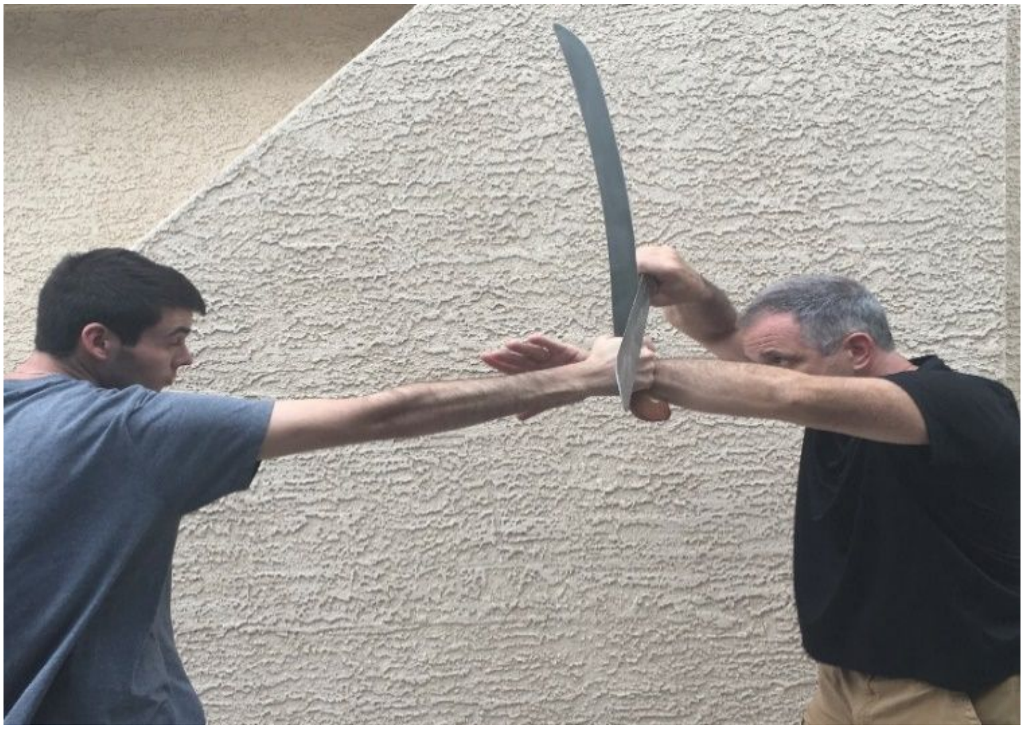
Movement #12- Two-Handed Version

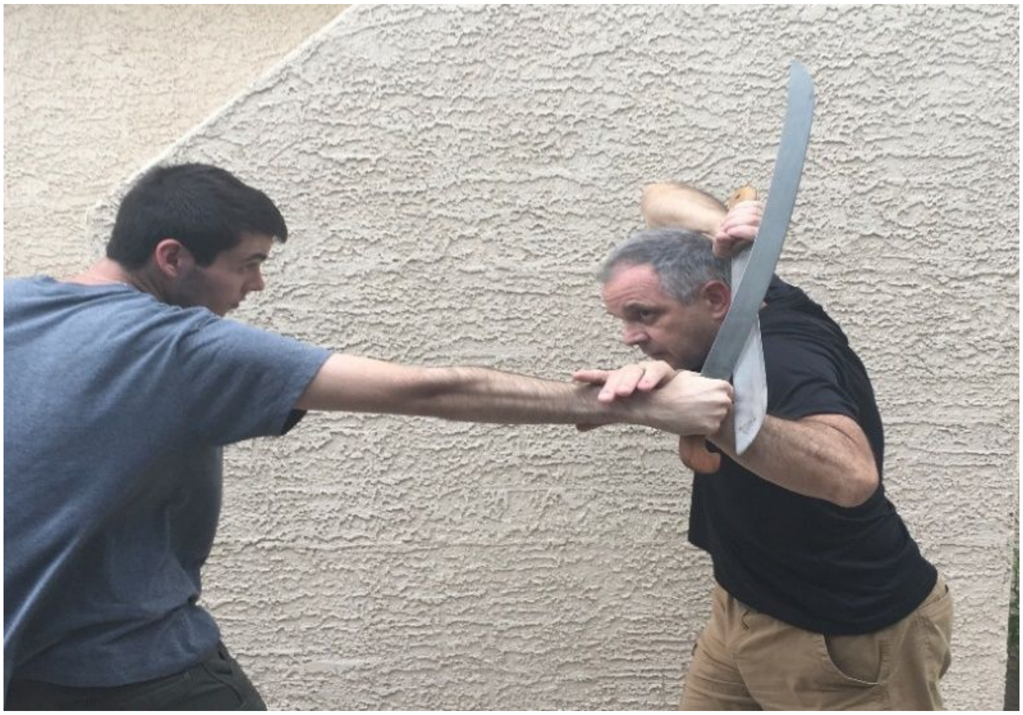
To perform movement #12 with a two-handed sword, start from a guard position. Raise the pommel of the sword upward while keeping the tip of the sword pointed down. This results in a roof cover of your head. Maintain eye contact with your opponent through the space between your arm, biceps, and the blade. Next, bring the blade around the back of your neck in a quick circular manner. As the sword blade reaches your right shoulder, strike downward with a diagonal slash. The entire sequence of movement is done in one fluid motion. This motion could be used to protect your flank when engaged with multiple opponents.

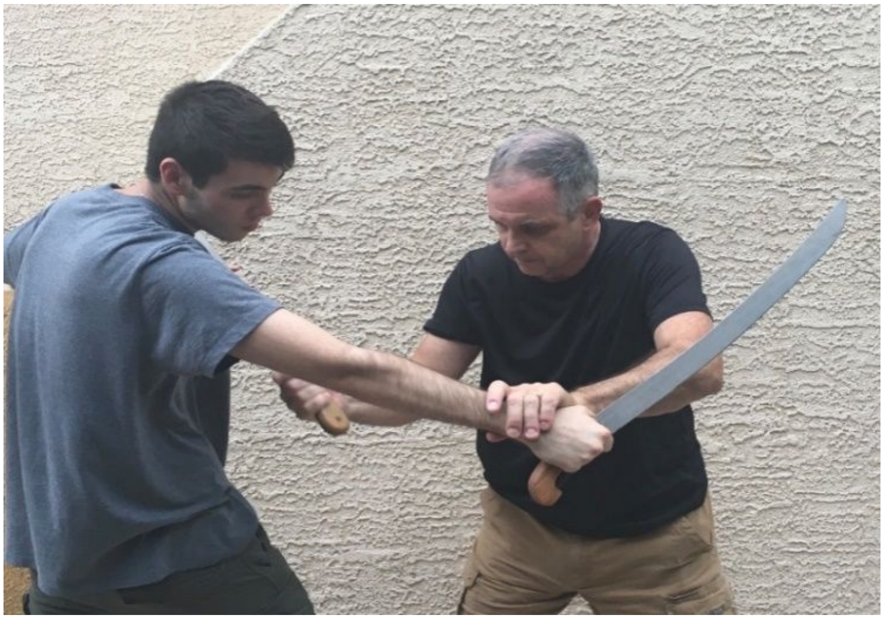




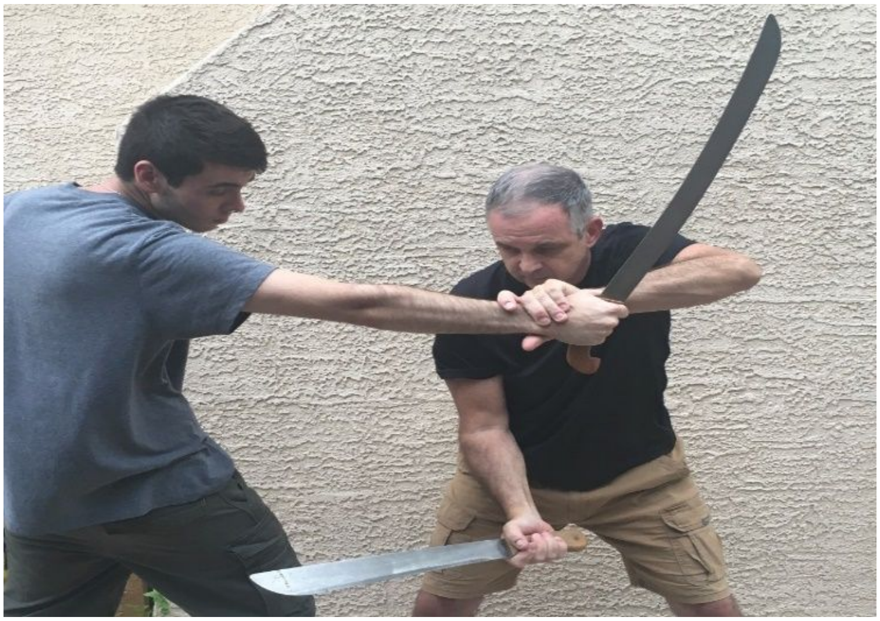
Movement #12- Application

One possible application for this movement is shown in the series of photographs below. The attack begins with a downward diagonal strike from the opponent. The defender angles his body offline as he closes the distance and meets the opponent's sword with a rising motion of his own blade. The defender's sword contacts the opponent's blade just above his weapon hand as his free hand checks the opponent's wrist. The opponent's strike is slowed by the defender's sword but is powerful enough to continue its forward movement. While controlling the opponent's sword hand, the defender moves his head to the side and allows his blade to move with the force of the attacker's blade to a position over his head. The defender's sword covers his neck, shoulder and arm as the opponent's sword finally comes to rest. Without hesitation, the defender brings his sword around his neck and executes a downward diagonal cut to the opponent's neck. He follows through with the cut, slashing across the opponent's body while maintaining a grip on his sword hand. The defender finishes the technique by bringing his blade back up over the opponent's shoulder and cutting his neck. From this final position he can control the opponent's movement with his arm locked and the sword blade leveraged against his neck. The opponent could easily be levered to the ground from this final position. Once again, the explanation of this technique seems complicated, but the movements are actually very natural and simple. Pay close attention to the photographs for clarity.





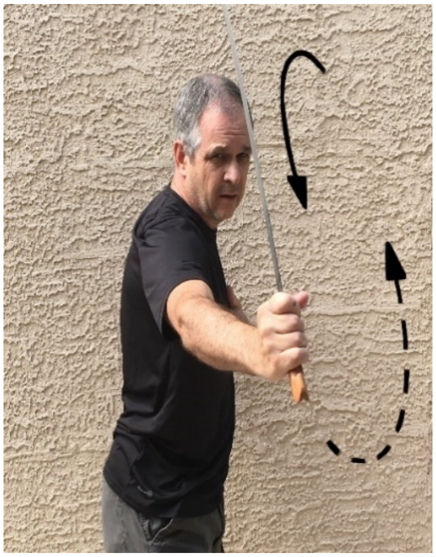


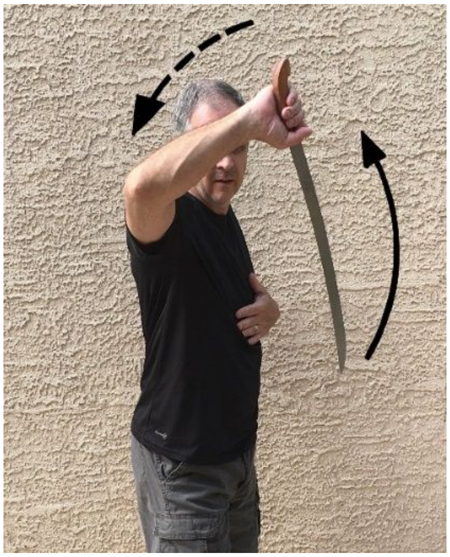


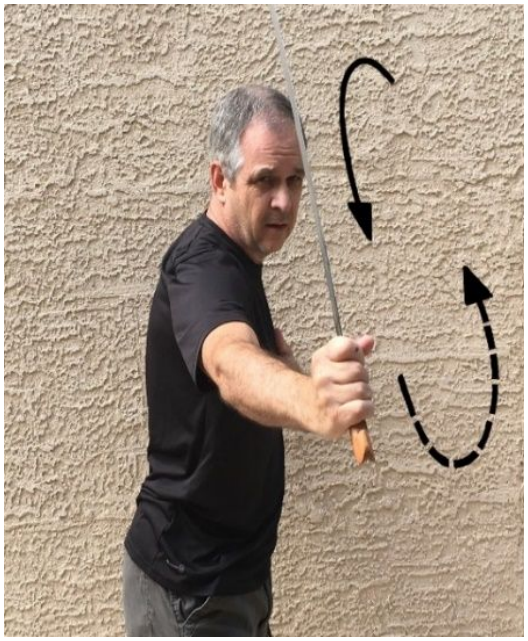
Movement #13

Circular Cutting

Circular cutting is an excellent movement to develop fluid technique and the ability to launch multiple strikes in rapid succession. To perform this movement from a guard position, execute a diagonal downward strike. As the tip of the blade passes through the imaginary target and points towards the ground, turn your wrist inward causing the blade to turn back towards your body. Without a break in motion, bring your hand and forearm up to around forehead level with the sword blade pointed down to the side. Rotate your wrist and whip the blade around into another downward diagonal cut. When done in a continuous motion, it creates a circular cutting movement to the front side of your body. The below photographs show the movement being performed. Solid arrows indicate the current direction of the movement. Broken arrows indicate where the blade will travel next. Notice the circular motion created by the continuous diagonal cuts. As you master this movement, execute it on the move with various types of footwork. Also expand or tighten the diameter of the circles and experiment with the direction of the movements.

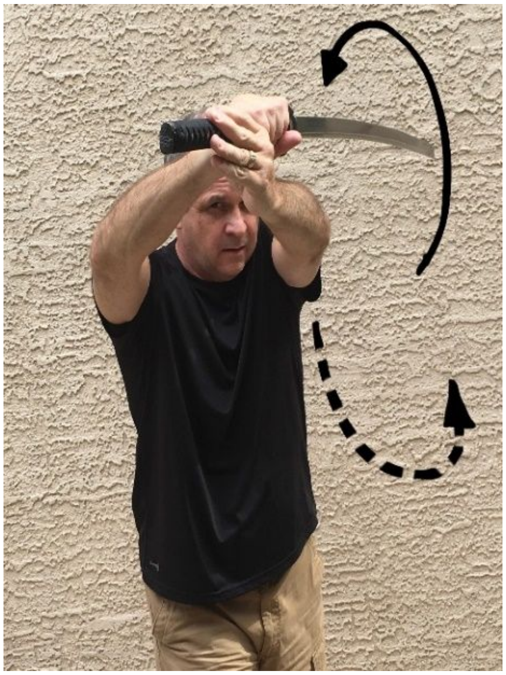


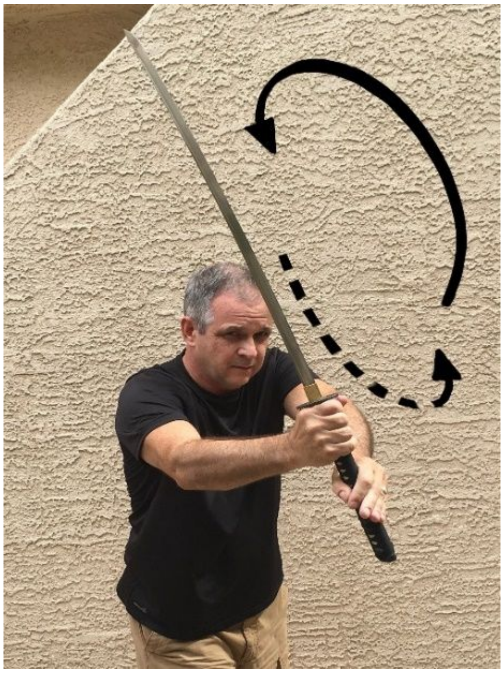


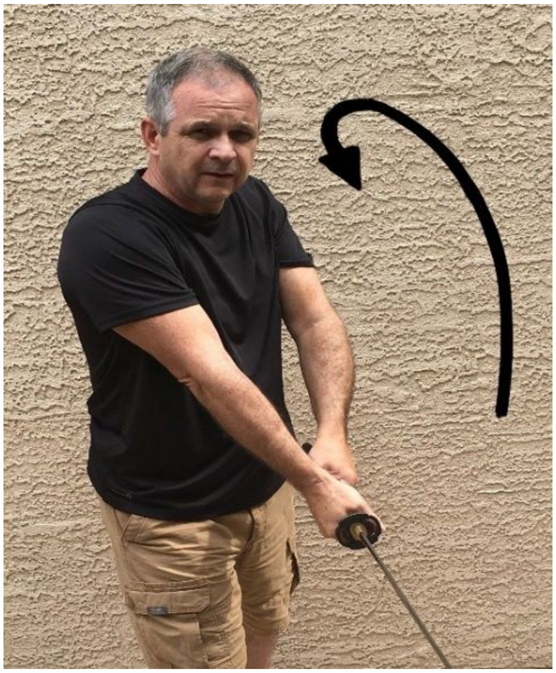


Movement #13- Two-Handed Version

With the two-handed sword, circle the blade around to your weak side. When the sword blade reaches the peak of the circle, whip the blade downward in a diagonal slash. Let the momentum of the blade dropping allow it to circle back along the original path and directly into a second circular cut. The cuts occur diagonally along your weak side. Make sure you pivot your rear leg back out of the path of the blade. You can execute as many circular cuts as needed. During practice of the movement, I recommend you perform at least three circular cuts in a row.

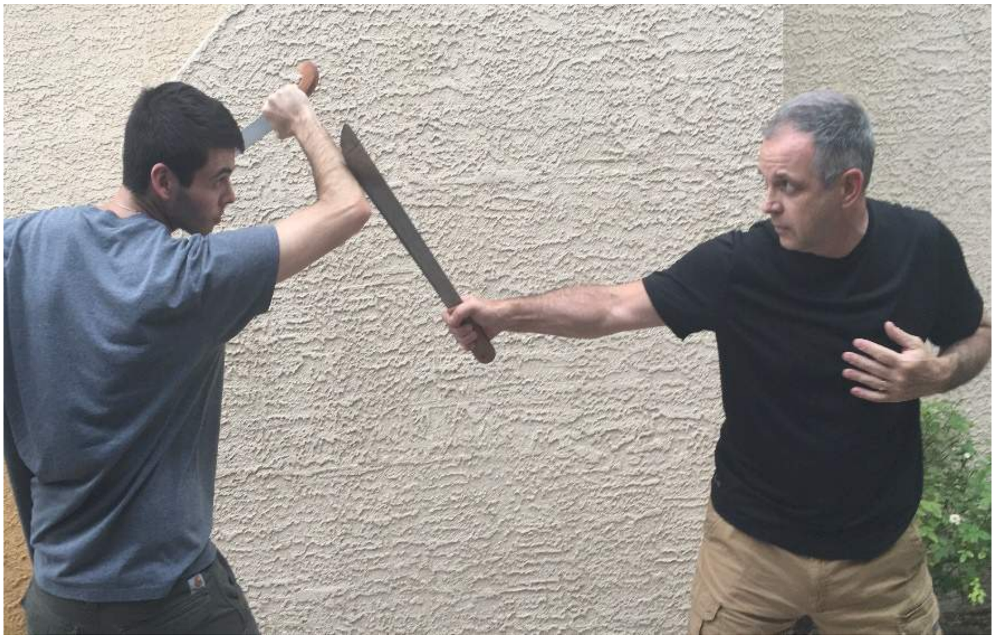


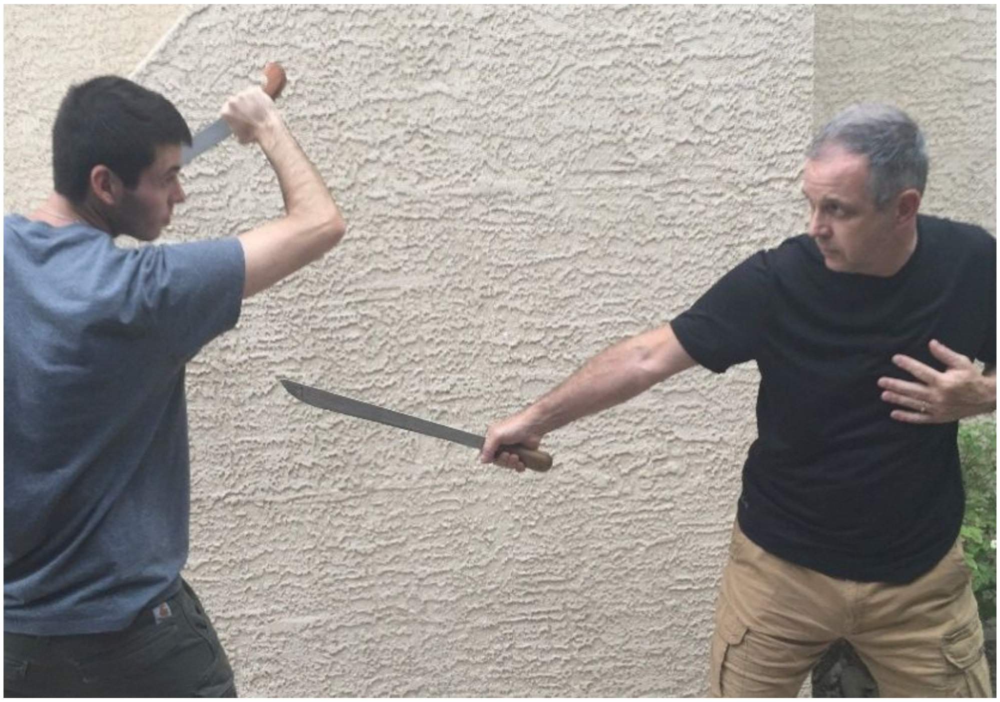


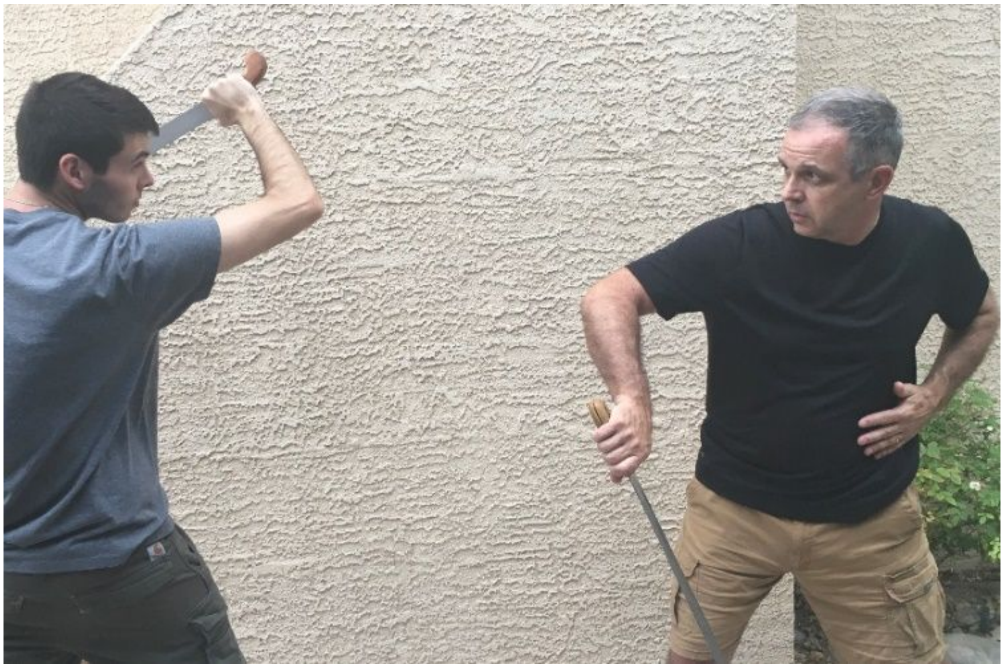


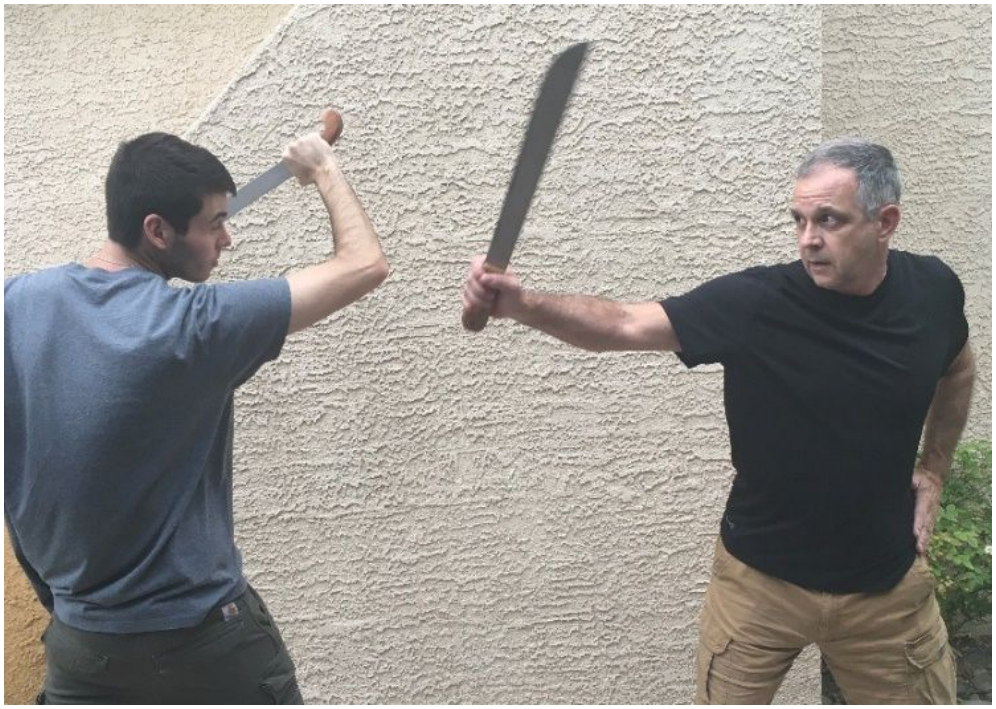
Movement #13-Application

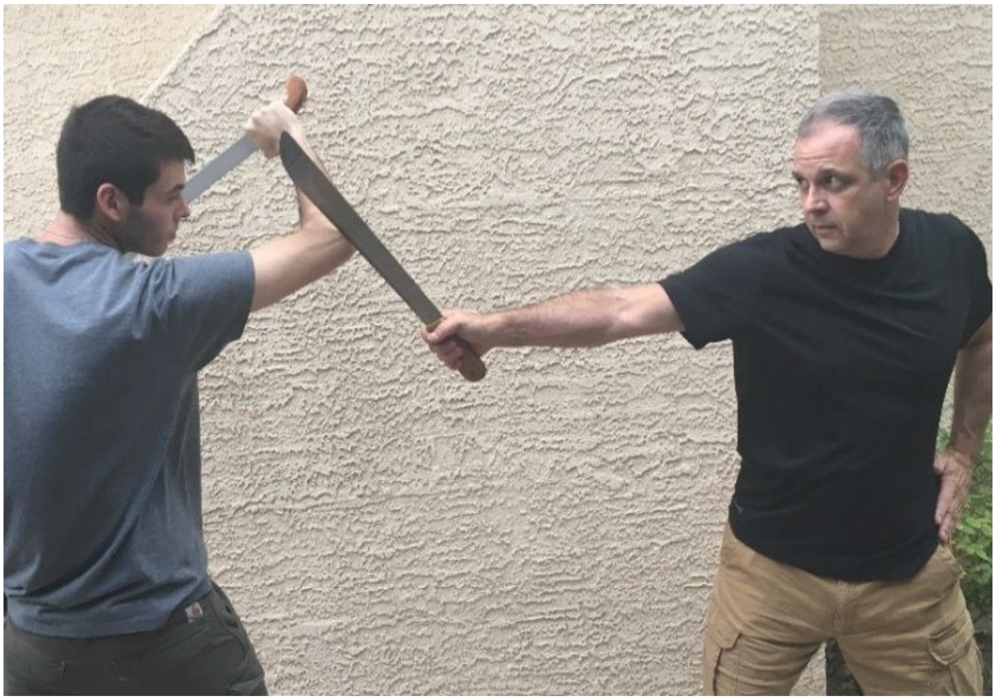
Circular cutting is an excellent technique for keeping an opponent at bay and attacking their weapon hand. When circle cuts are executed in rapid succession, they creates a whirlwind of steel that is almost impenetrable. In the example below, as the attacker steps in and prepares to attack, the defender executes a downward diagonal slash to his forearm. He continues the motion of the slash and flows directly into another downward diagonal slash. When executed together, these slashes form a circle motion. The defender also uses his hips, shoulder, and arm to whip the blade downward for added power. The entire technique is executed in about one second.











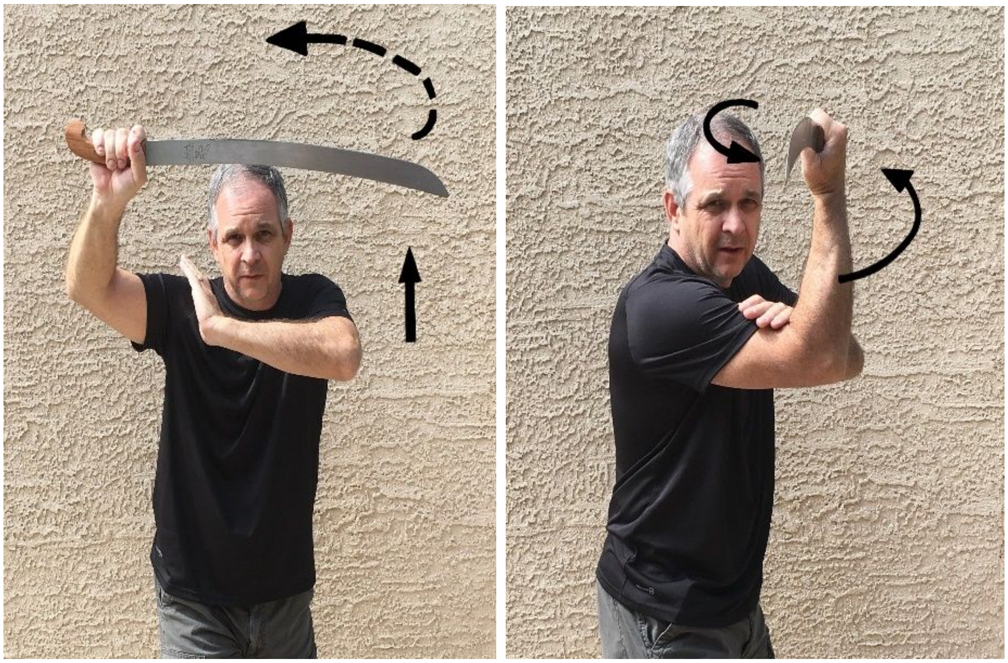
Movement #14

Whipping the Blade

Although the primary functions of the sword include slashing and thrusting, there are other ways to employ the weapon in a fighting situation. In previous movements we looked at using the handle of the sword to attack with butt strokes. In this technique we will utilize the side of the blade in a whipping manner to attack or defend. To perform this movement from a guard position, raise your weapon hand slightly above your head with the blade horizontal as if to block a high attack. Immediately whip the sword blade to the inside by bringing your hand and forearm inward across your body. The sword blade stays horizontal throughout the movement and your wrist snaps forward at the last minute to add power to the motion. Contact is made to the target with the side of the blade.

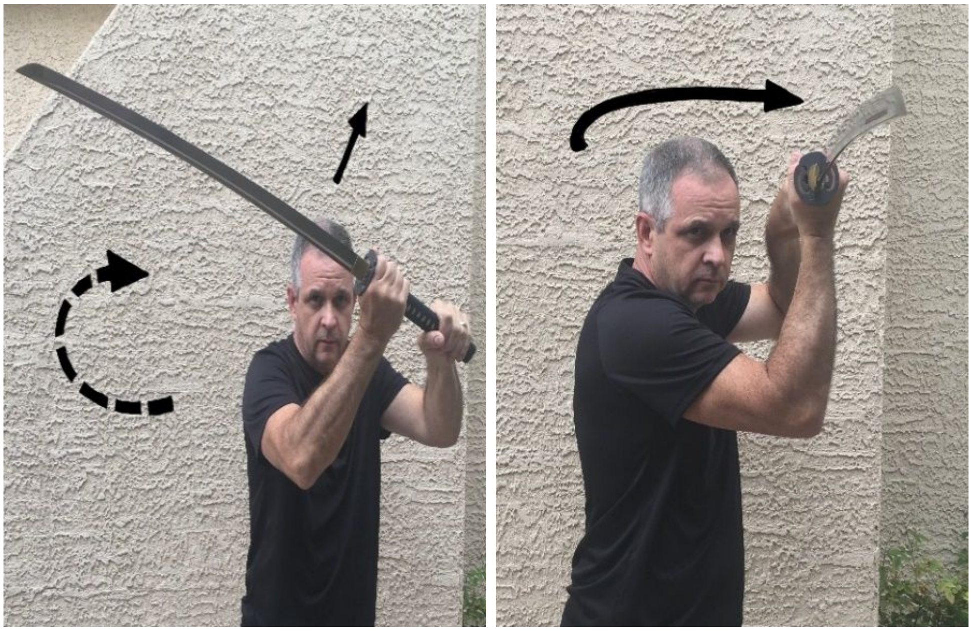
The whipping technique can generate a great deal of power, primarily from the wrist but also from the hips and shoulders. The blade immediately snaps back after the attack as you recover your guard position. This technique can be used in an offensive or defensive manner. Striking with the blunt side of the sword blade is very effective in knocking an opponent's weapon offline and creating openings in his defense. It is also a very quick and deceptive technique that can cause blunt trauma and stun an attacker.

The below photographs show this movement being performed. Start from a stationary position and eventually move offline or enter as you execute the whipping motion.



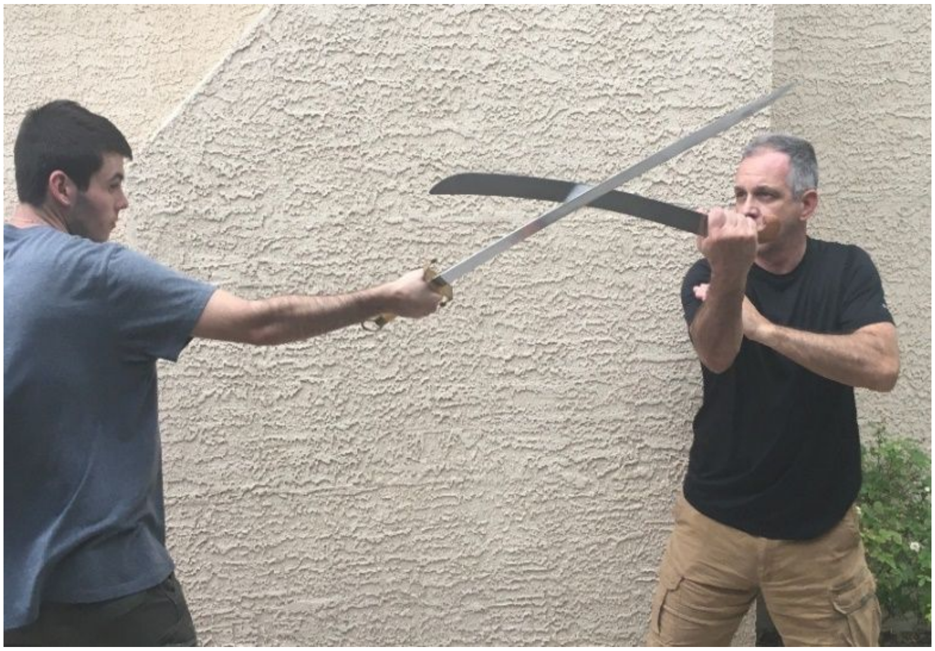
Movement #14- Two-Handed Version

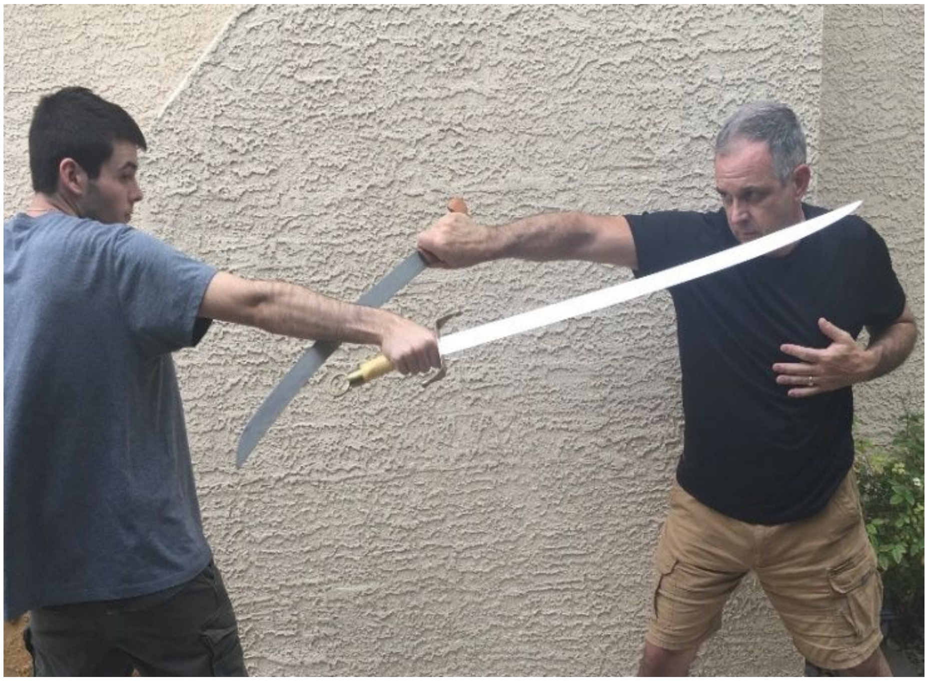
The two-handed version of the blade whipping movement is performed almost identically to the one-handed version. One primary difference however is the snapping of the wrist. Obviously you can generate more of a whipping motion when you are using a light weight sword with a shorter blade. A longer and heavier two-handed sword requires a stronger grip to control the blade as it picks up momentum during the snapping motion. The hand that is held closest to the handguard will still be the one providing most of the snap as you execute the technique. To perform the whipping blade with a two-handed sword, start from a guard position. Lift your hands upward in front of your body so that the sword blade moves in a horizontal position above your head. Using your body weight, hips, shoulders, arms, and wrists together, whip the flat edge of the blade towards the target. The below photographs show the movement being performed.



Movement #14- Application

As was stated, whipping the blade of your sword can be done in an offensive or defensive manner. In the below photographs, the attacker strikes with a downward diagonal cutting motion. The defender whips his sword inward and deflects the opponent's attack with the flat side of his blade. He immediately flows into an upward cut to the opponent's sword arm or body.

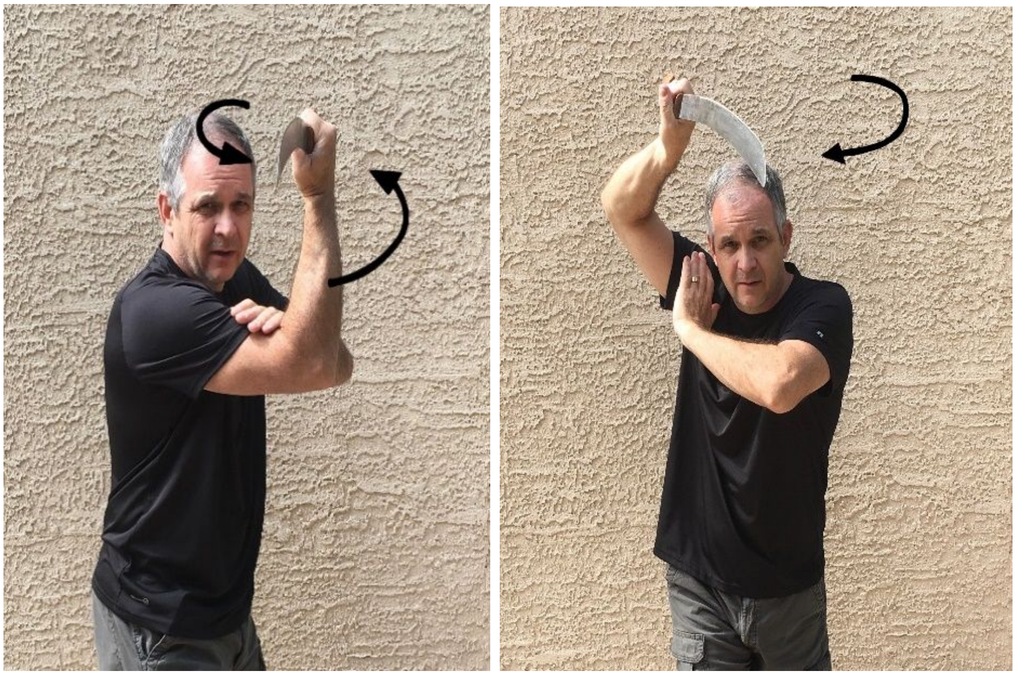




Movement #15

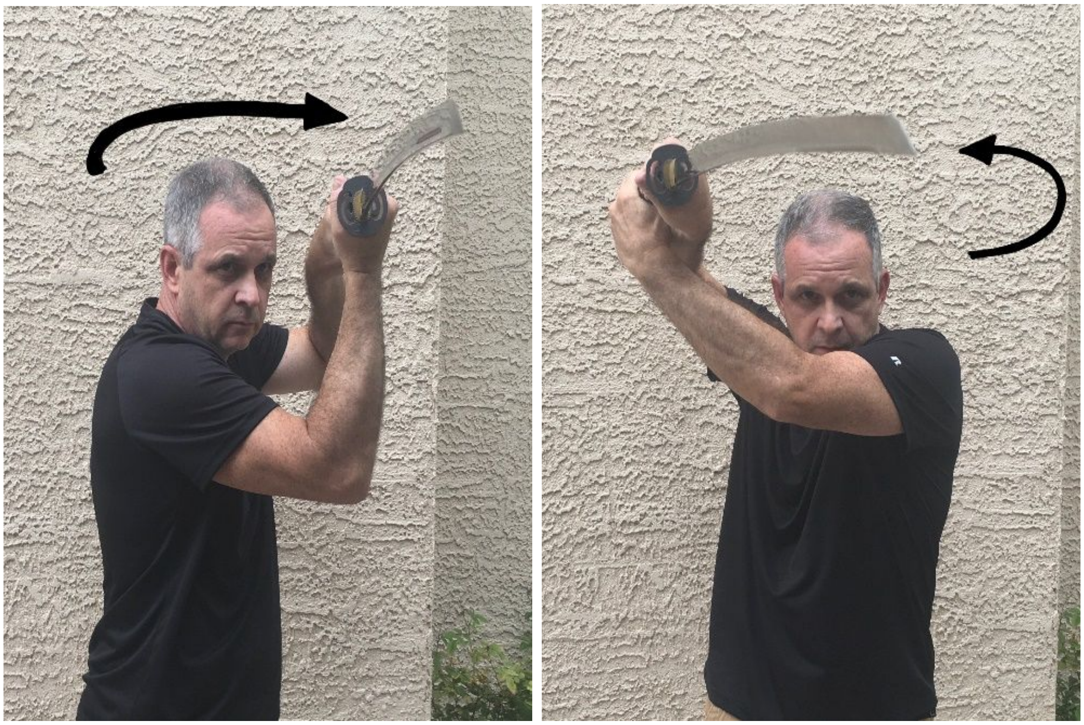
Fanning the Blade

In the previous movement you practiced whipping the blade as a form of attack or defense. In this movement, you will add an addition whipping motion to the opposite side. The two techniques executed together create a fanning motion. In the Filipino martial arts, this technique is called the abaniko which translates as fan. To perform this movement from a guard position, raise your weapon hand upward in front of your head in a motion similar to throwing an uppercut punch in boxing. As your sword reaches about forehead level, rotate your wrist inward in a quick snapping action. This motion propels your sword blade inward towards your imaginary target. The blade strikes inward with the flat edge directly in front of your head. Immediately whip the blade around in the opposite direction to the outside. Your wrist and elbow rotate to the outside to propel the blade as it moves. Again, striking with the flat edge of your blade against an imaginary target directly in front of you. Notice that the sharp edge of the sword is facing upwards during each strike, and impact is made with the flat edge. Repeat this action at least three times in rapid succession for the technique. The below photographs show the movement being performed. Be sure to keep your rear hand inside and close to your body as you execute the movements. For the inside whipping strike, the rear hand works as a brake to slow the momentum of the blade. This is done by checking your biceps as the whipping motion is made. Fanning with the blade is a very quick and deceptive technique that can be used offensively or defensively depending on the circumstances you are dealing with. Although the technique is normally done with the flat of the blade, you can also fan with the sharp edge of the sword blade with slight modification to the technique. Feel free to experiment with these movements and modify them to suit your needs. Nothing is set in stone.



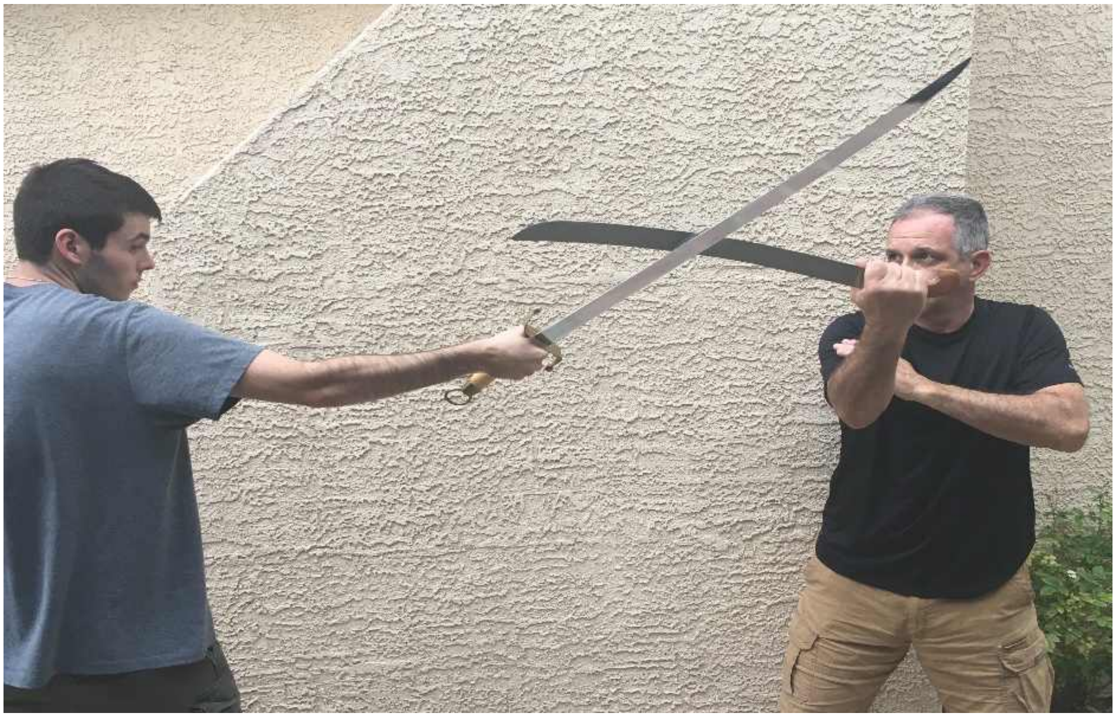
Movement #15- Two-Handed Version

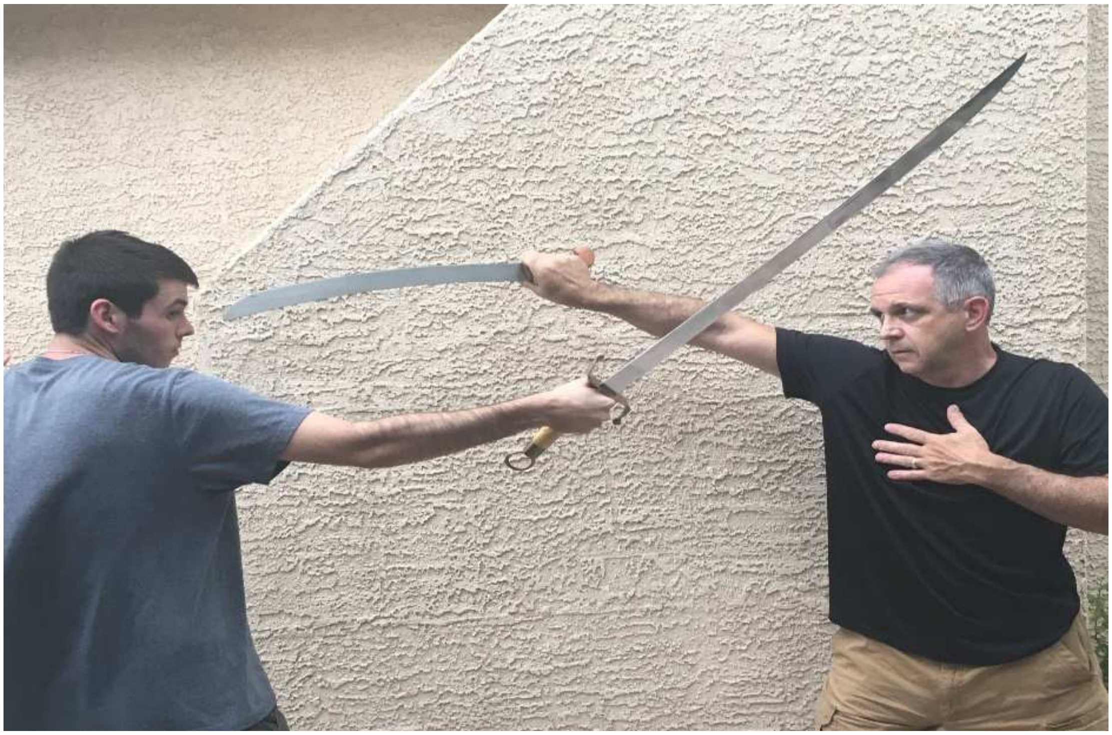
The two-handed version of fanning the blade is performed very similar to the one-handed version. The main difference here is the reduced mobility and speed you will have with a larger two-handed weapon. From a guard position, raise your sword upward with the sharp edge facing the sky. Turn your whole body inward from the waist as you whip your sword blade to the inside, striking with the flat edge against an imaginary target in front of you. Immediately change directions and whip your sword blade back the opposite direction striking to the outside with the flat of the blade. Execute at least three repetitions of this movement for the drill. In the one-handed version, your rear hand helped slow the momentum of the inside strike. In this version, the rear hand controls momentum on the handle of the sword. Make sure you do not overextend and whip the blade beyond the sides of your body. This is even more critical when using a larger sword because of the additional momentum generated.

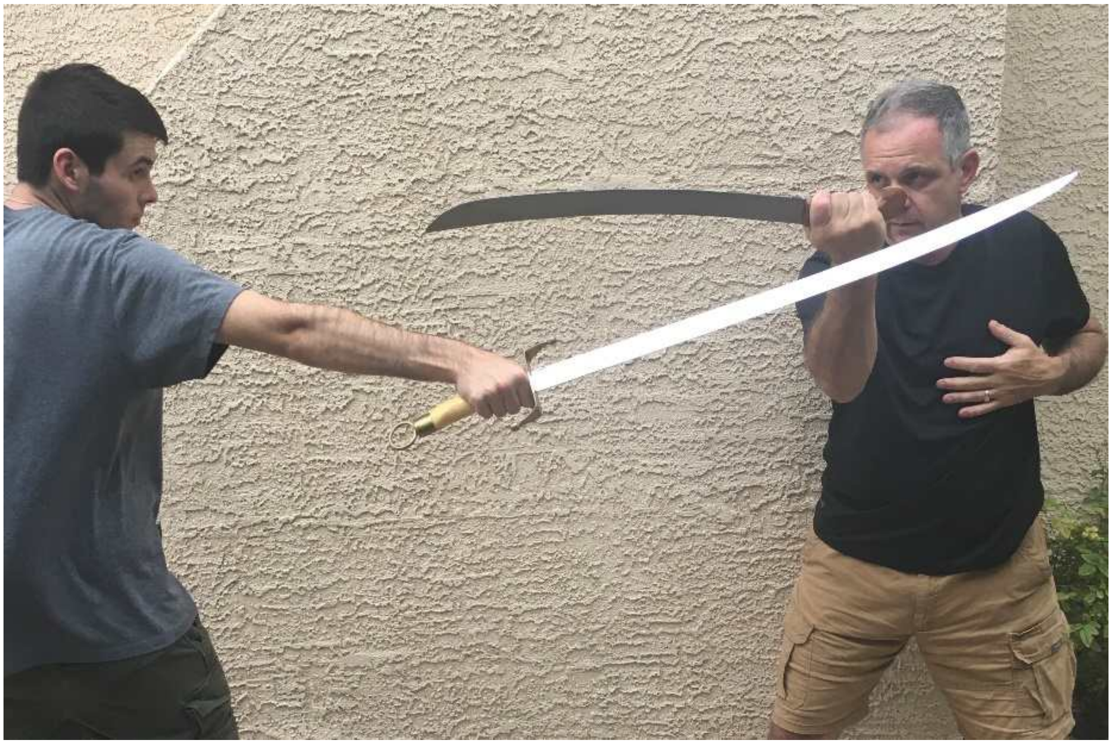


Movement #15- Application

In this application for fanning the blade, the attacker strikes with a downward diagonal slash. The defender meets the attack with the flat edge of his blade by whipping his sword inward. The momentum knocks the attacker's sword off line and creates an opening for the defender to follow up immediately with an inside whip with the flat edge of his blade. The defender then executes another inside whipping attack to the attacker's head then draws his sword back in to cover his centerline. The three whipping motions are done in rapid succession and resemble the rotation of a ceiling fan. In addition to being applied for offensive or defensive purposes, the fanning motion can also be applied vertically or horizontally in relation to the attacker. Incorporate this technique into your sparring and you will soon realize the many applications it presents.



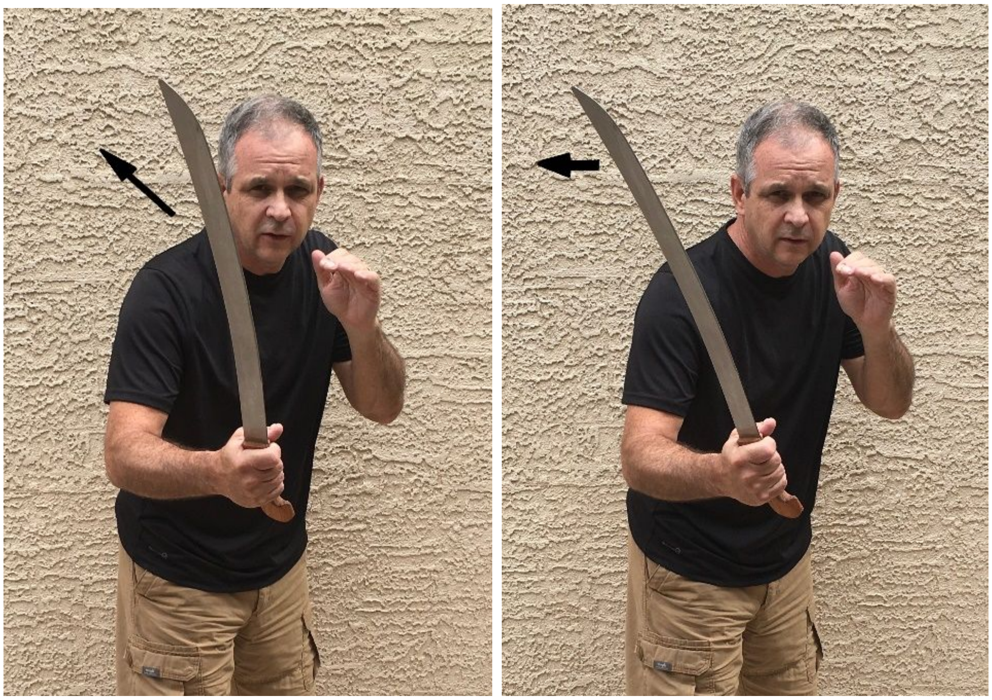


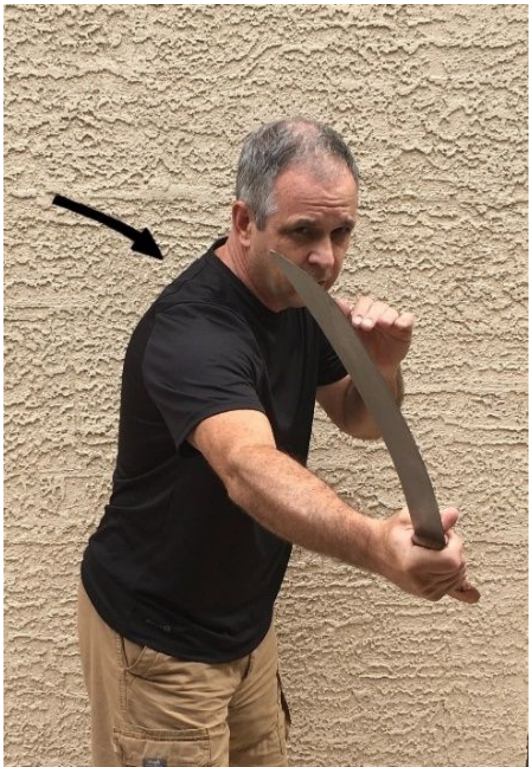


Movement # 16

Back Cut and Slash

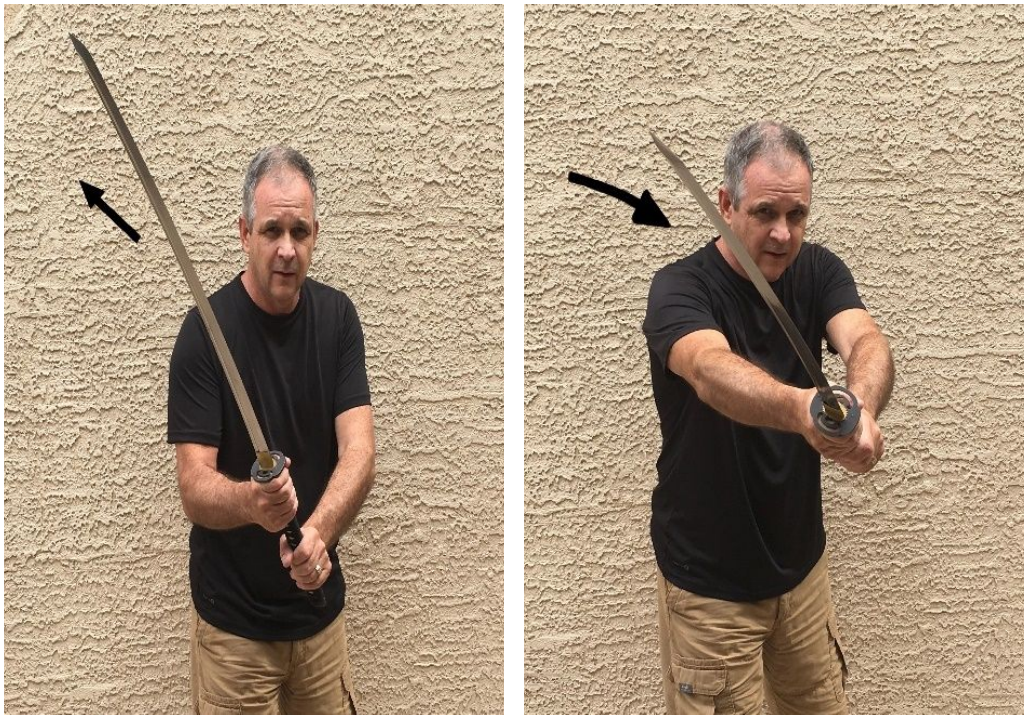
The cut back and slash movement is a simple and effective technique to add to your arsenal of sword techniques. To perform the movement from a guard position, turn your sword slightly so that the back edge of the blade is facing to the outside. Next, cut back to the outside of your body with the upper portion of the blade. Some swords are double edged or have a sharpened point that allow for an actual cut with this movement. Other swords are not sharp on the back edge, but the technique is still performed in the same manner regardless. The back cut should be executed in a short snapping manner without overextending too far past the body. In an actual situation, the distance of your back cut will depend on whether or not you are using it for attack or defense, and the location of your target or the opponent's sword. In some cases, the back cut can used in a reverse hooking manner to launch a short surprise attack. The below pictures show the back cut and slash movement being performed. Be sure to practice the movement on the opposite side of the body as well.





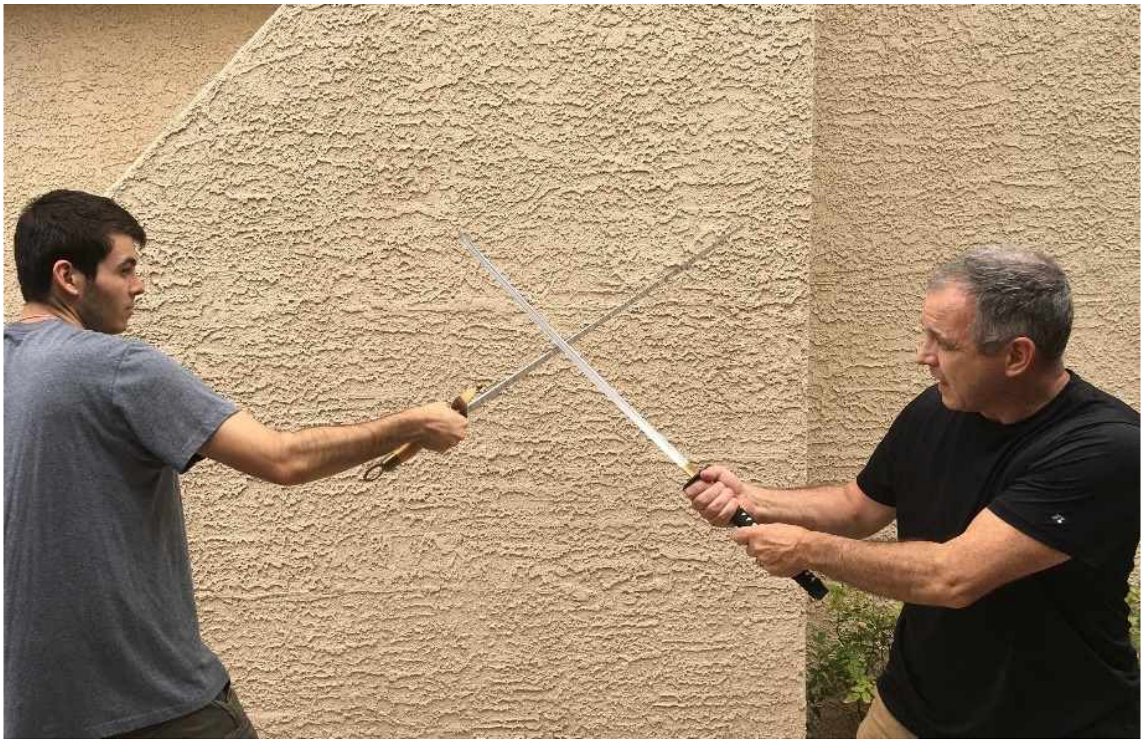
Movement #16- Two-Handed Version

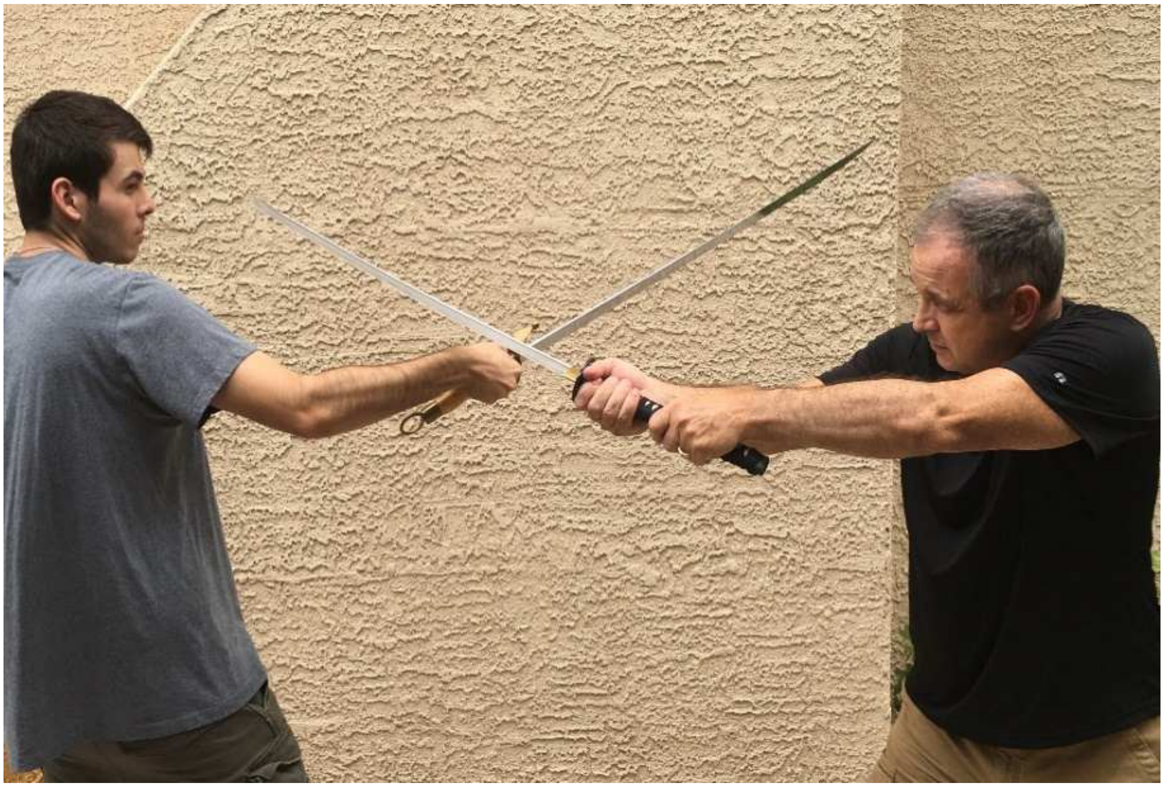
From a guard position, jerk the tip of your sword backwards rapidly. This motion resembles the action you would take with a baseball bat just before you prepare to swing at the ball. Without hesitation, slash forward with a downward diagonal slash. Execute the movement on the opposite side of the body as well.



Movement #16- Application

The back cut and slash has many applications. One excellent example is to use the back cut as a beat to knock the opponent’s sword off line and create an opening to attack. This concept is shown in the below photographs. From a guard position the defender and the opponent cross blades with the defender’s blade on the inside line. He immediately executes a back cut against the oppoent’s sword which momentarily knocks it off line and creates an opening for attack. The defender then moves in as he executes a downward diagonal slash to the opponent’s neck. The entire sequence of movements takes place in about one second.

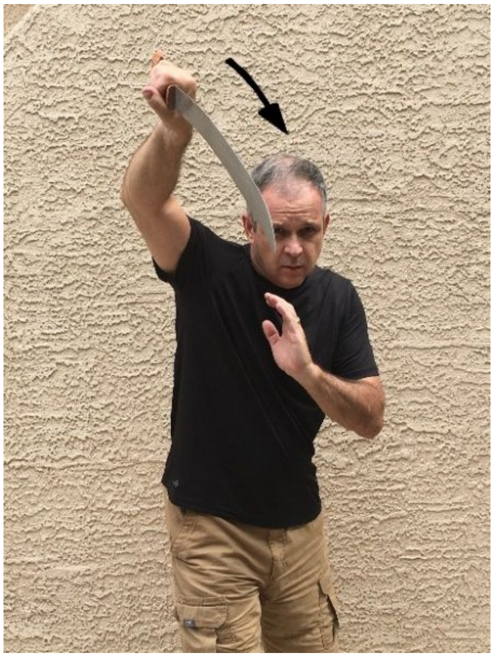


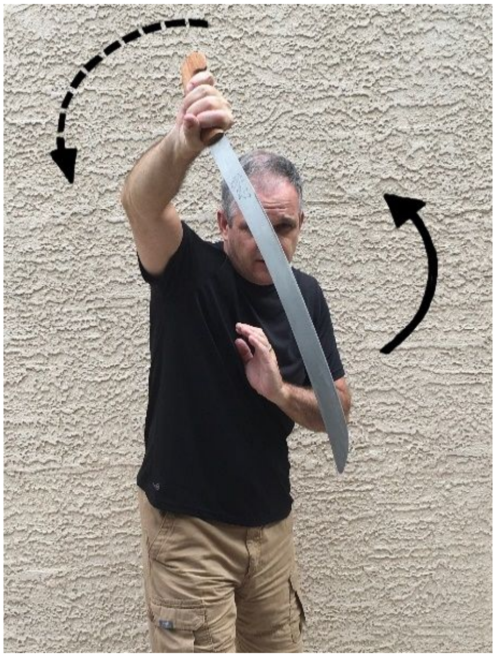


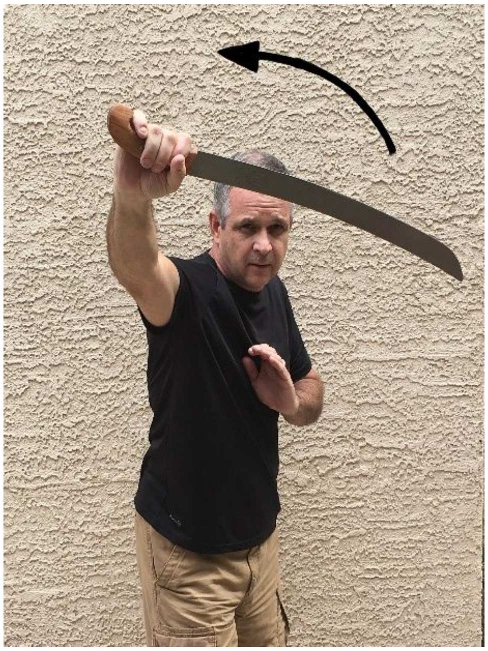
Movement #17

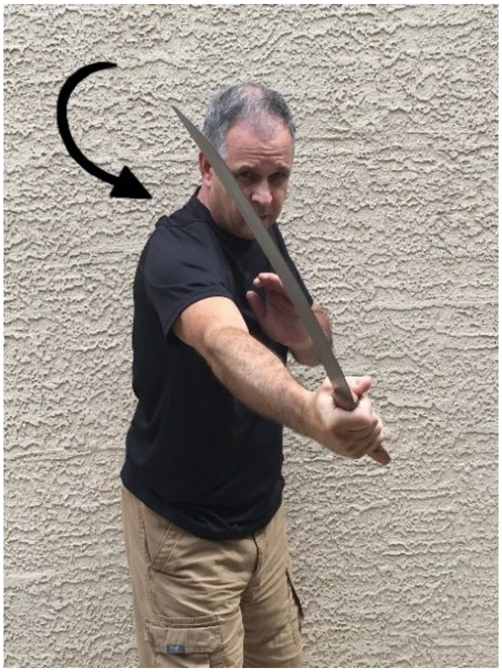
Overhand Thrust and Downward Diagonal Slash in a Downward Figure Eight Motion

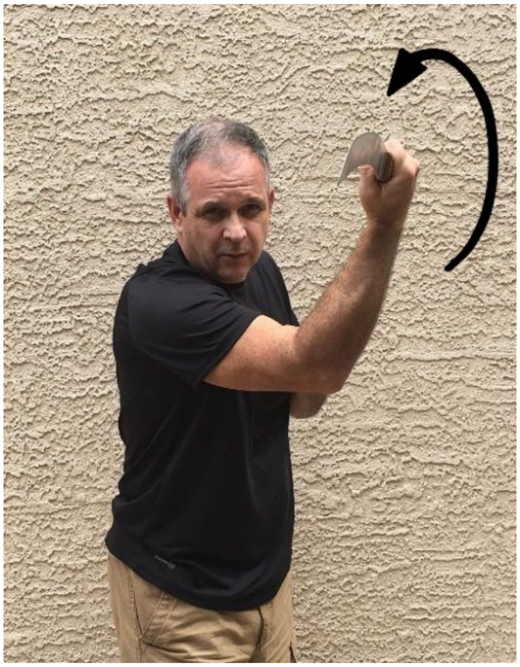
This movement is one of my favorite techniques to practice and to use in sparring. It is deceptive and very difficult for an opponent to see coming when executed at full speed. For this movement we will flow from a thrust into a slash in a downward figure eight motion. From a guard position, execute an overhand thrust. This technique resembles the thrust a bull fighter uses to strike the bull over his cape. As the tip of the sword reaches the imaginary target in front of you, rotate your wrist inward and flow directly into a downward diagonal slash. The tip of the sword makes a circular motion as the sword rolls into the slash. At the completion of the slash, execute a reverse overhand thrust on the opposite side of your body. Once again, rotate the wrist and circle the sword tip around to flow into a downward diagonal slash. When the entire motion is executed in a flowing manner, it makes the shape of a downward figure eight. In the beginning you can make the movements large but tighten them up as your skills improve. The below photos show the complete movement being performed.

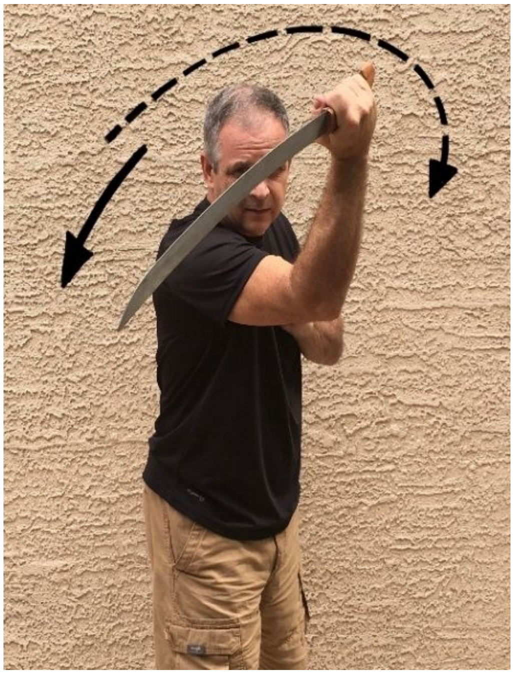


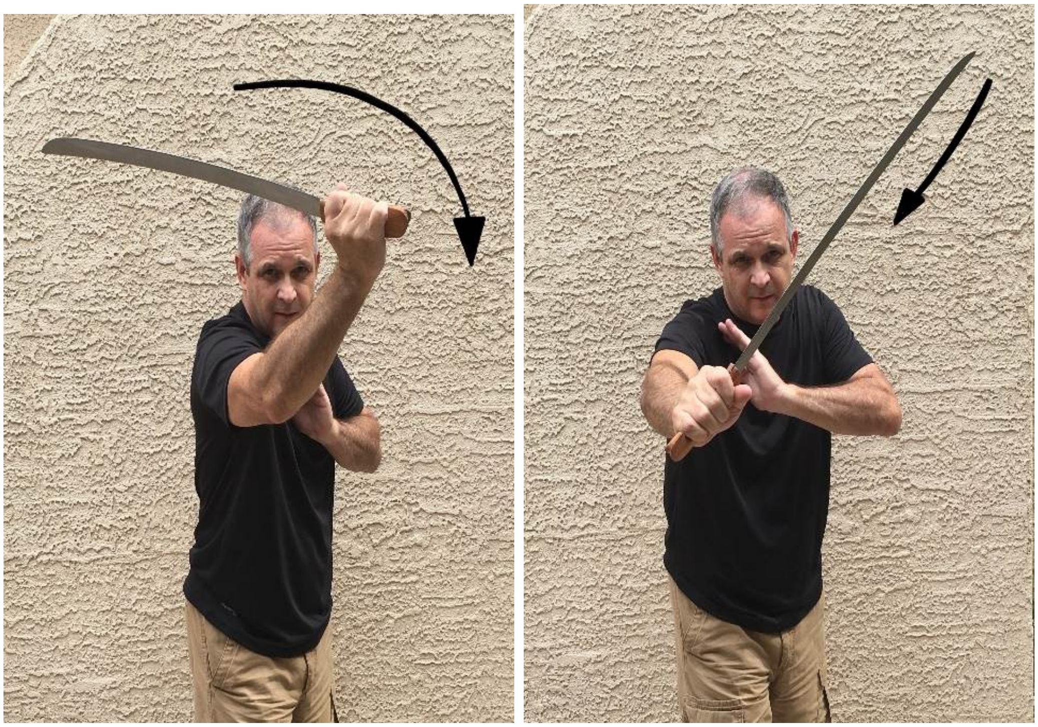






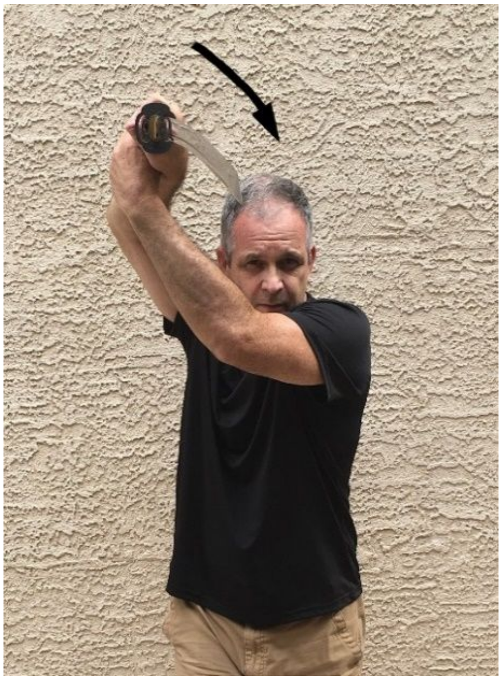


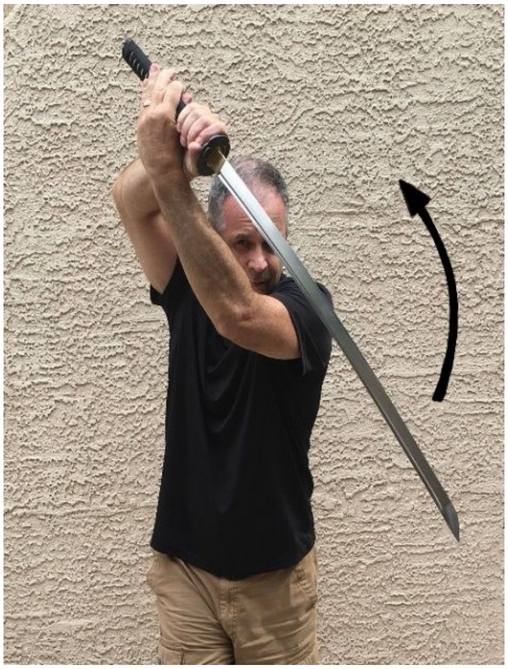


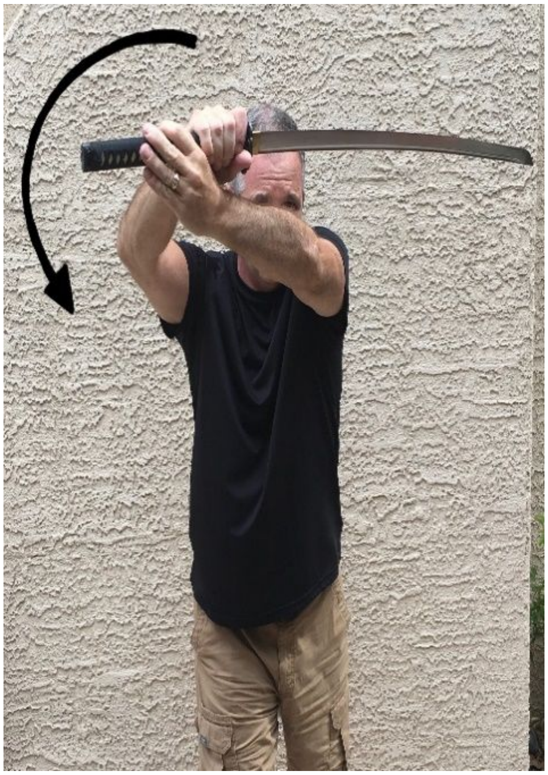


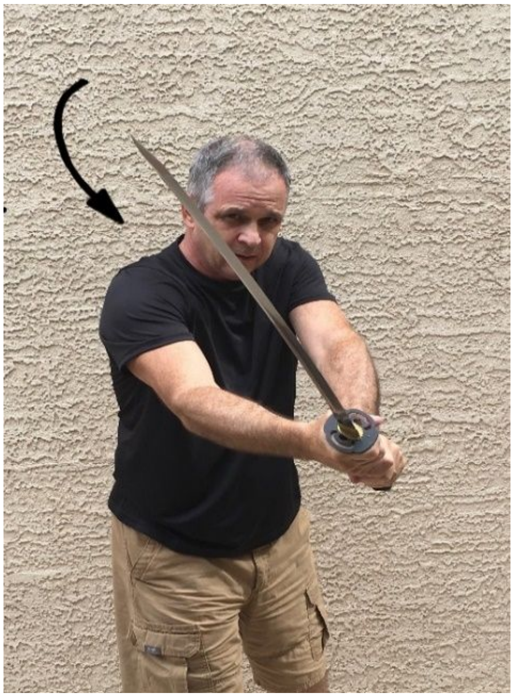
Movement #17- Two-Handed Version

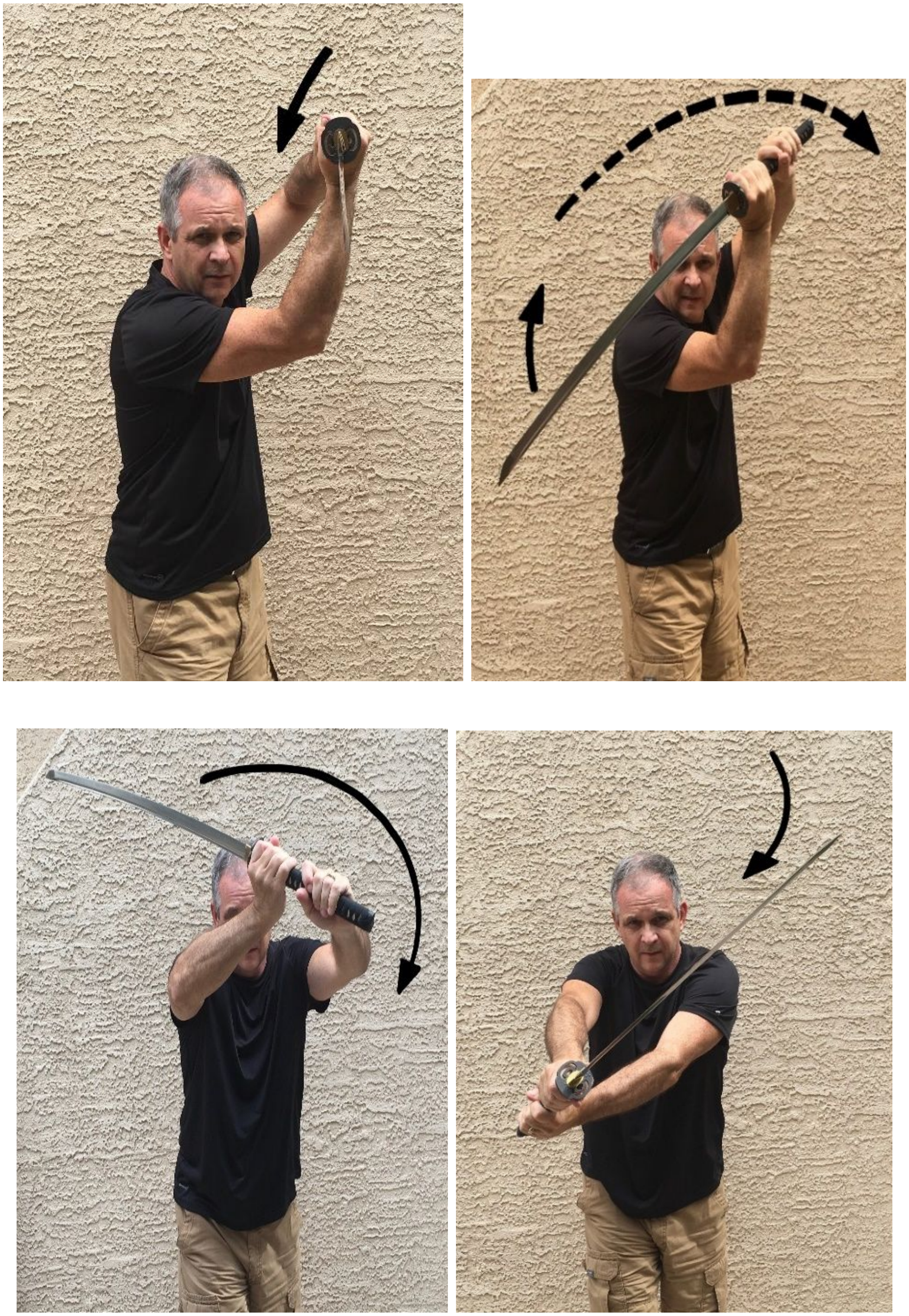
The two-handed version of this movement will require a loose grip with the rear hand to facilitate the fluid motion of the blade as it rotates. If your wrists are flexible, you can probably perform the movements with a tighter grip of the sword handle. To execute the technique, strike with an overhand thrust. Allow the tip of the blade to pass through the imaginary target and circle around your shoulder area into a downward diagonal slash. If you did use a looser grip during the rotation of the blade, be sure to tighten your grip as you execute the overhand thrust and the downward diagonal slash. From the downward diagonal slash, flow directly into an overhand thrust to the opposite side of your body. After the thrust passes through the imaginary target, rotate the tip of the blade around your shoulder area and flow into a downward diagonal slash. Repeat the entire series of movements until you can execute them fluidly with no break in the motion. It is critical that the transition from the thrust into the slash is one continuous motion. The below photographs show the movement being performed.





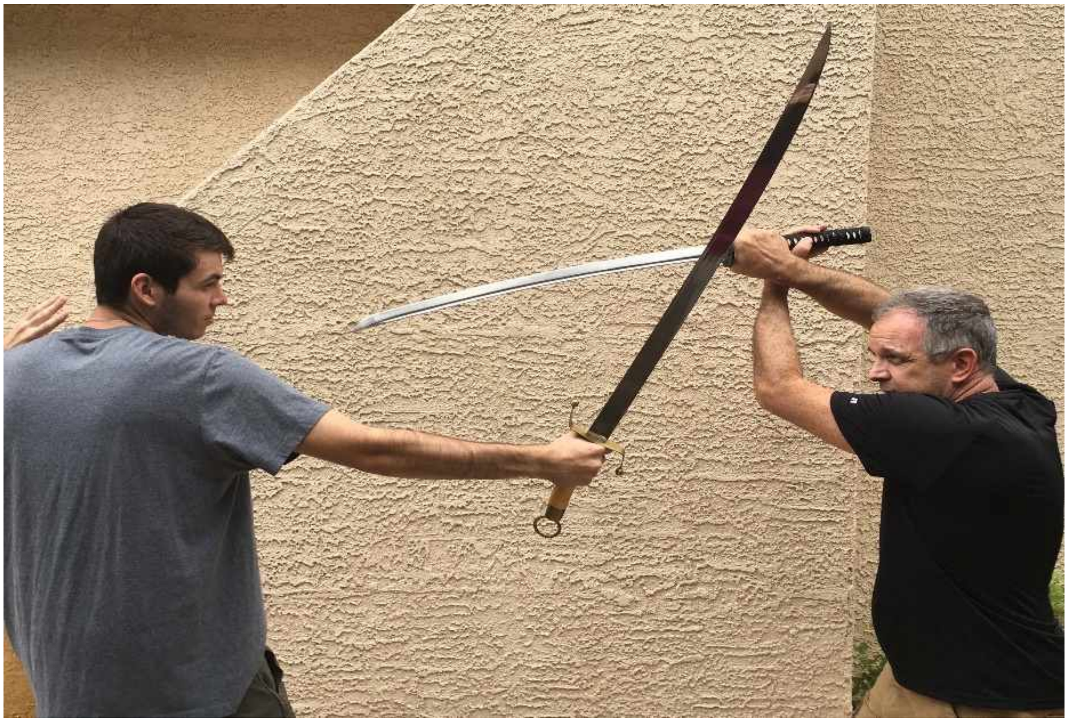


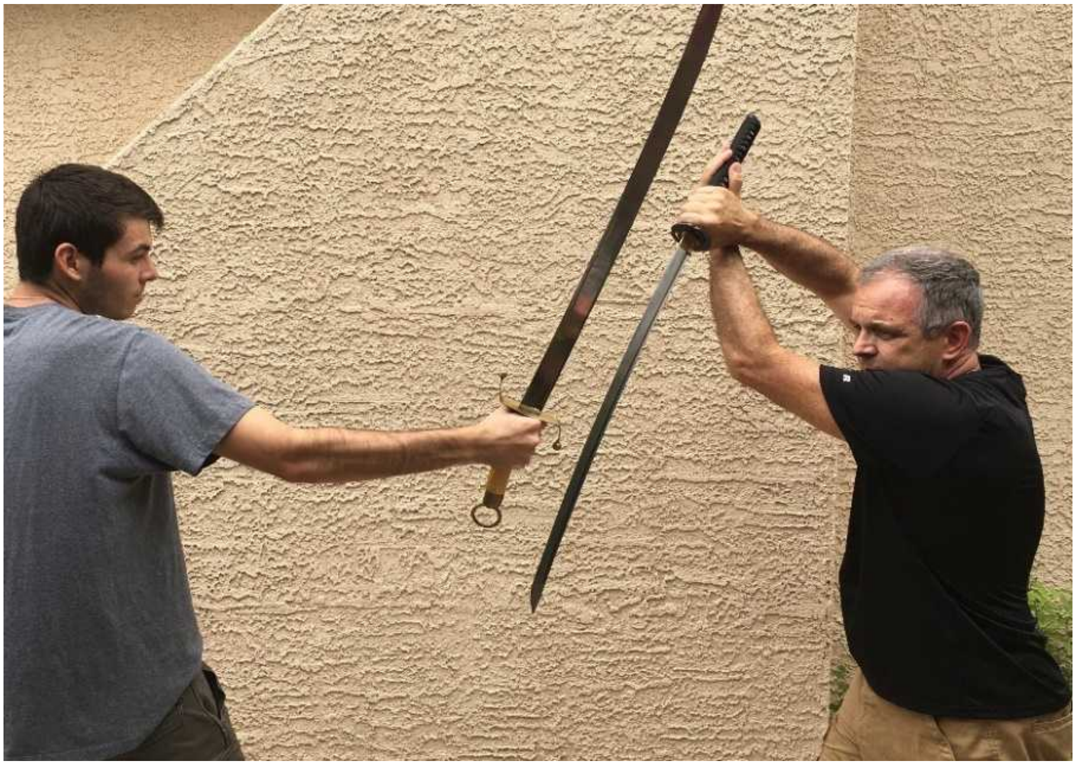


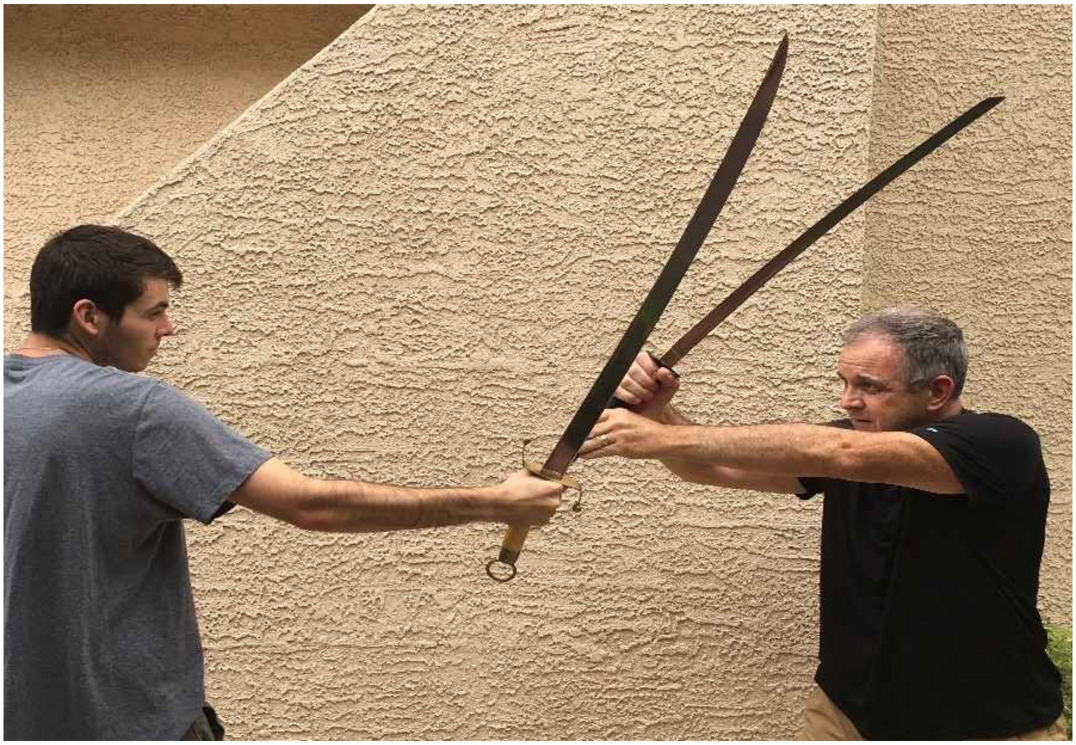


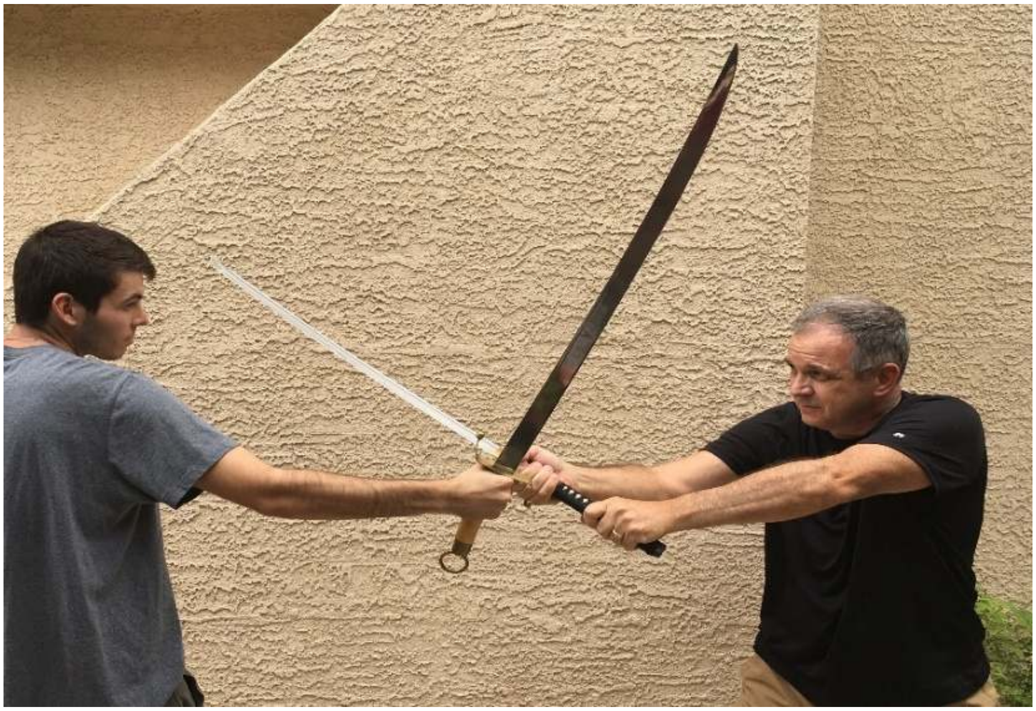
Movement #17- Application

As the opponent strikes downward with his sword, the defender sidesteps and executes an overhand thrust to the throat. He then covers against the opponent's blade as he swings his sword around and executes a downward diagonal slash to his head and neck.

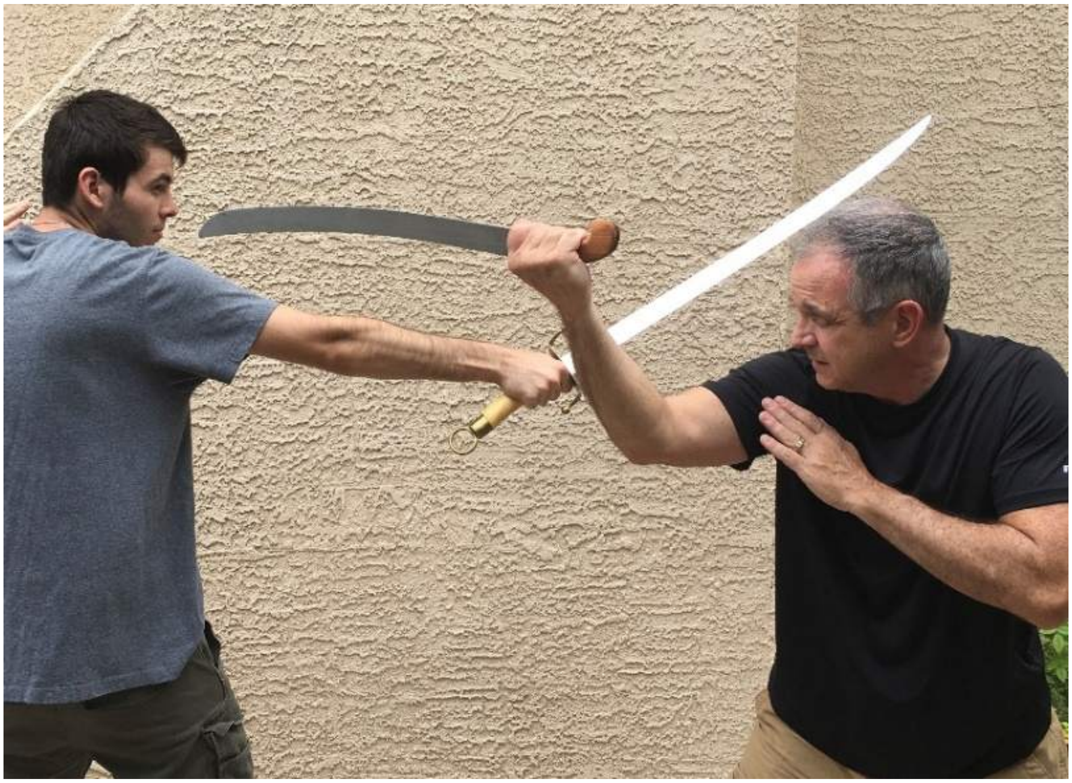


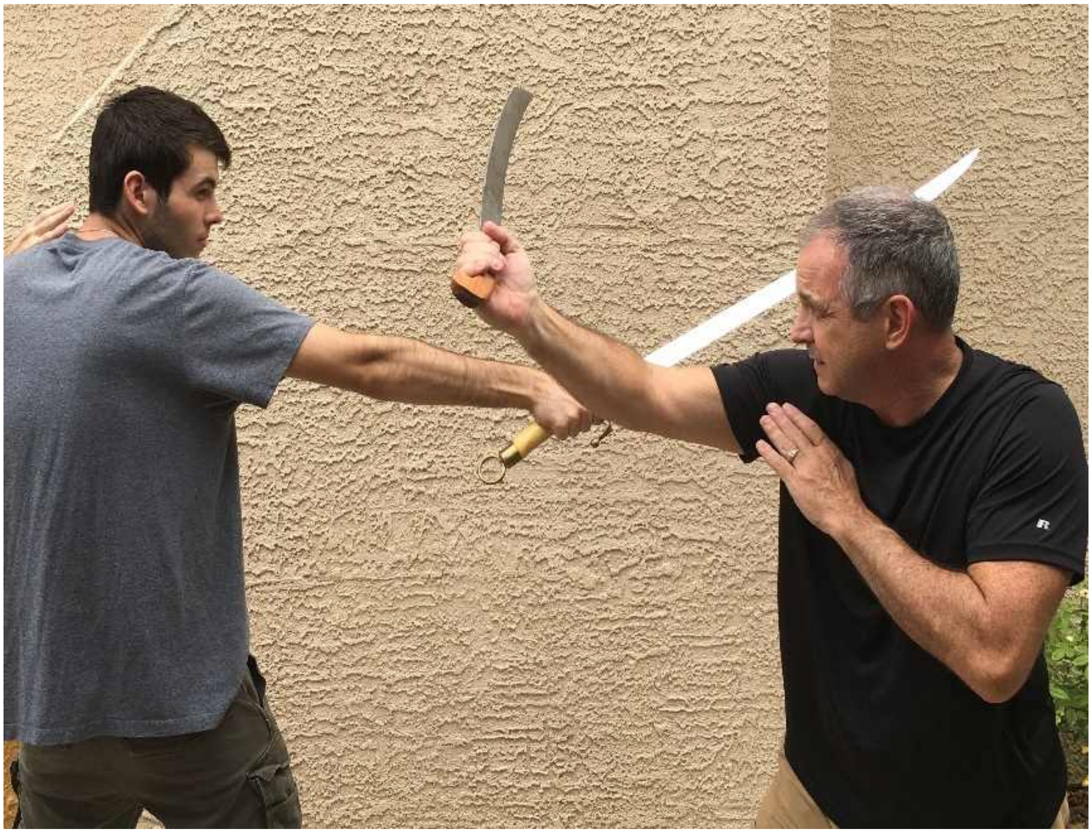


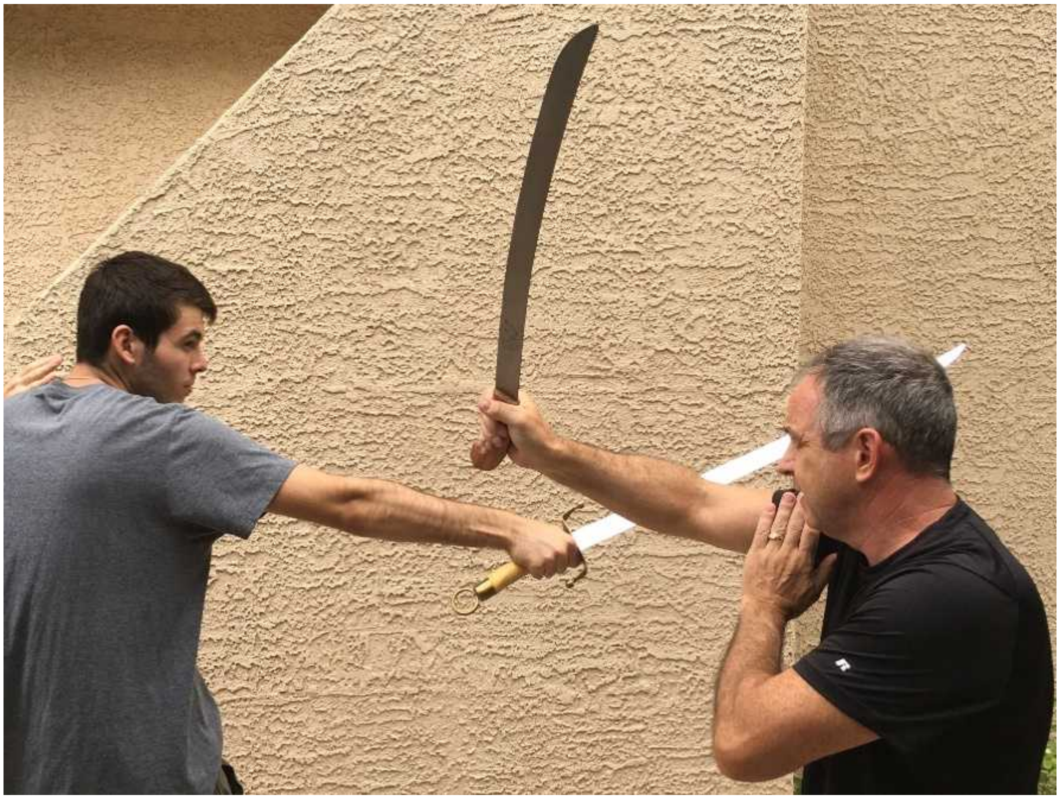


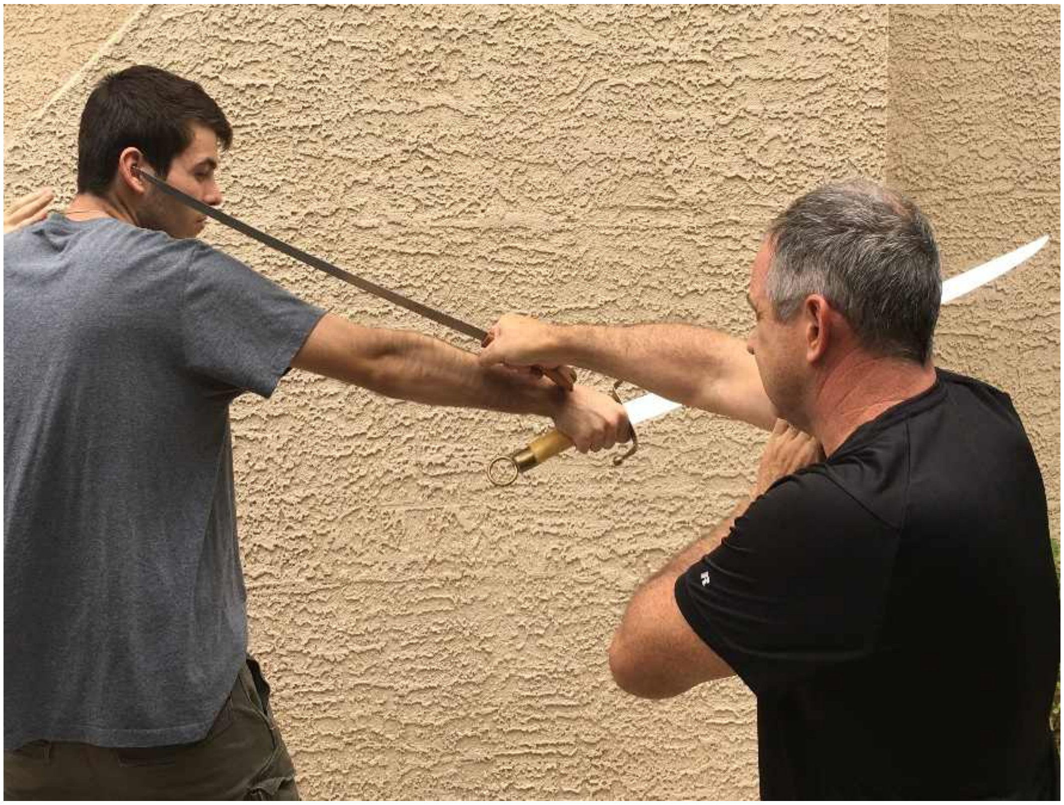


In this second example with a one-handed sword, the same concept is utilized. The attacker strikes with a downward slash which the defender avoids by stepping offline as he strikes with an overhand thrust. Without hesitation, he rotates his sword blade and flows into a downward diagonal slash. In both examples, it is extremely important to angle your body offline and pivot the rear foot out of the line of attack as the counterattack is executed.





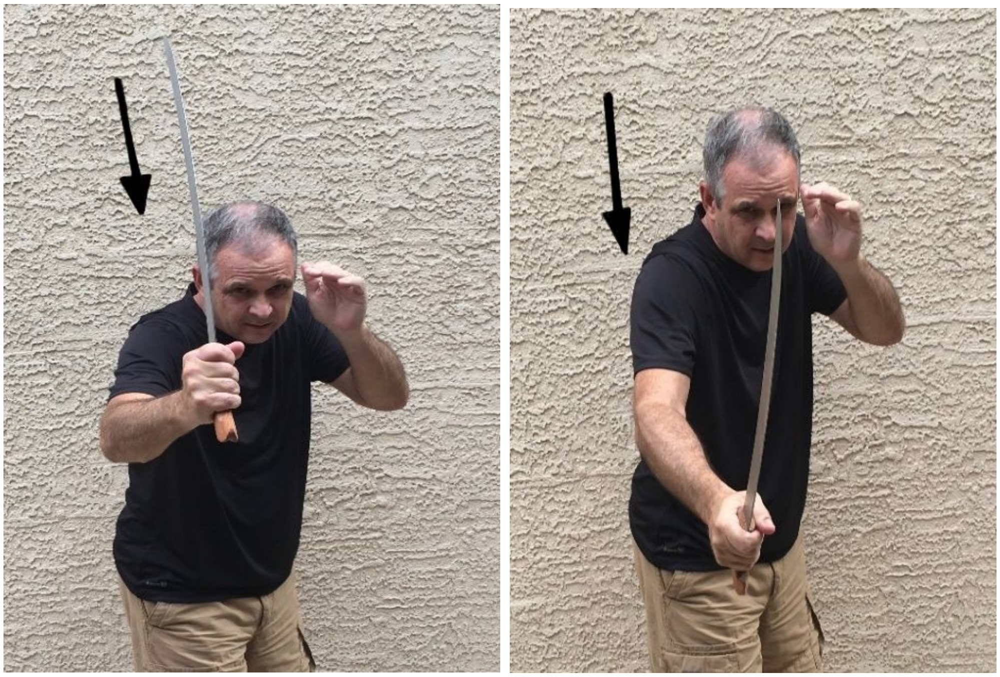


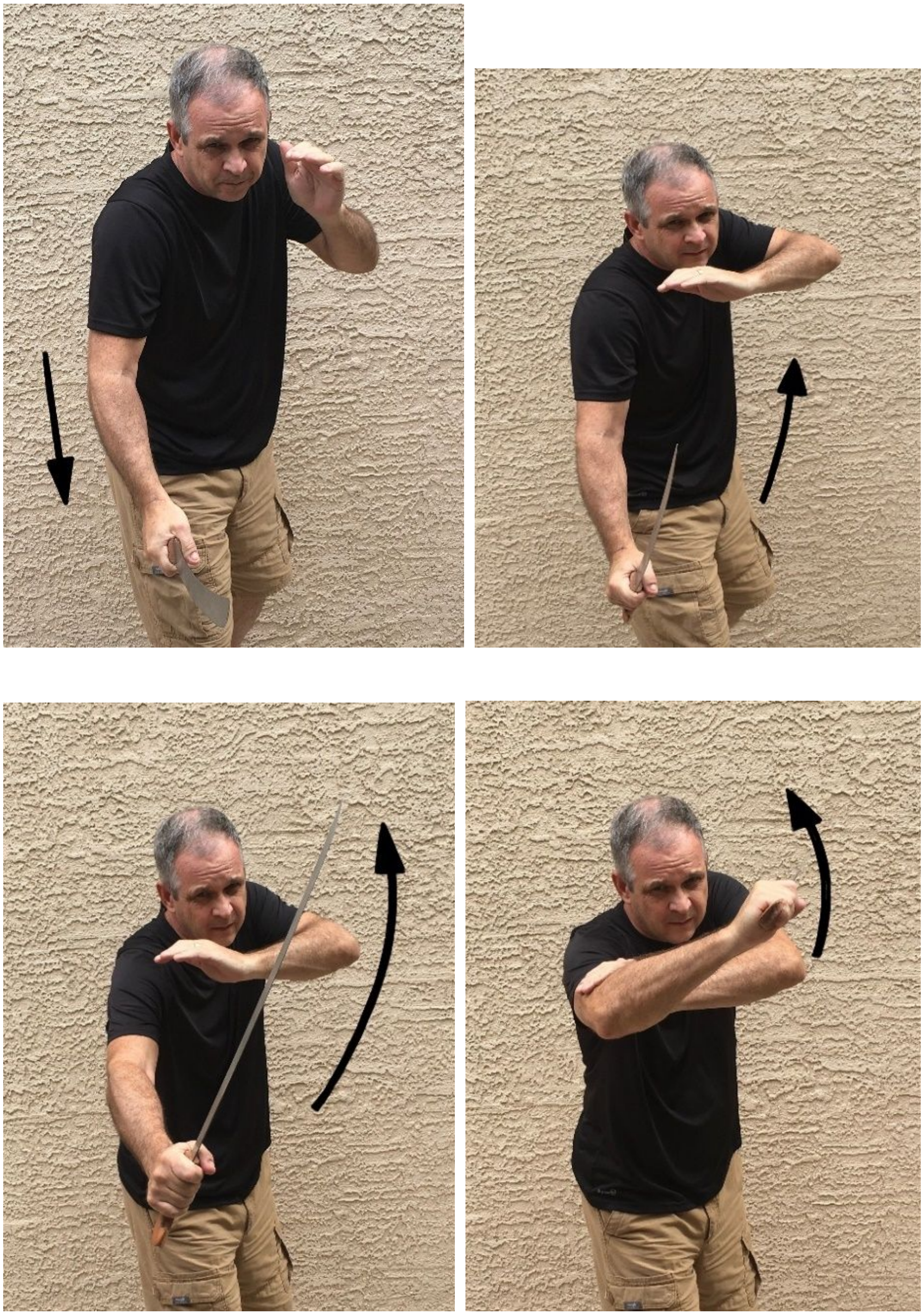


Movement #18

Center Slash and Uppercut Thrust

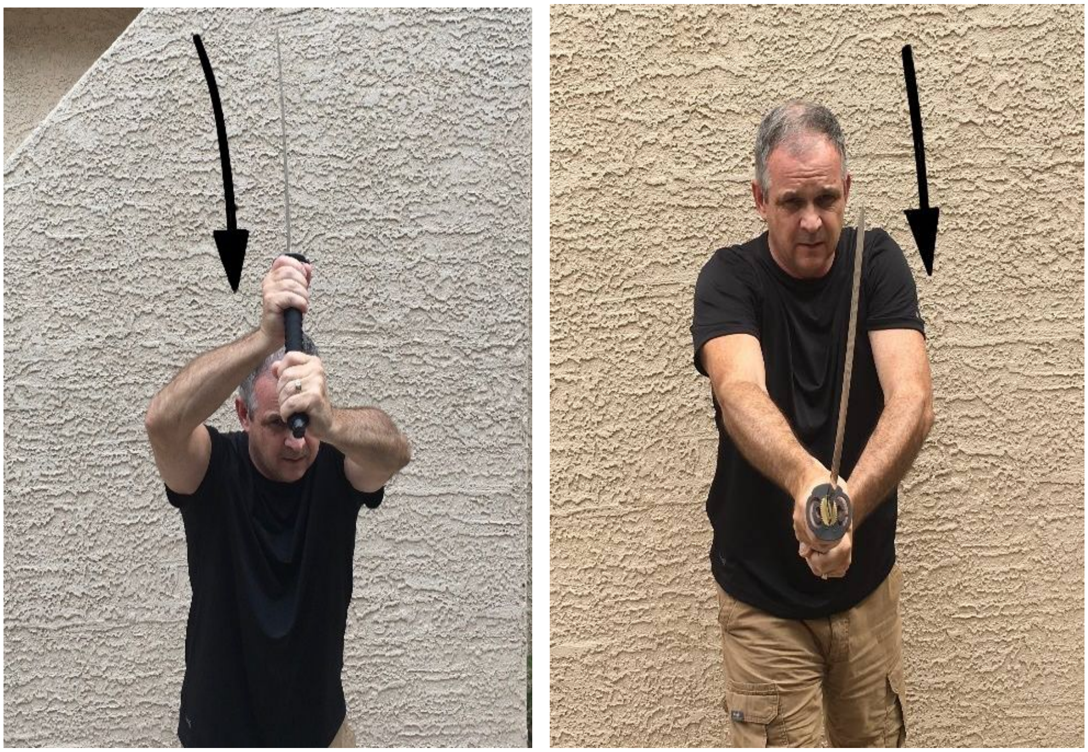
The center slash and uppercut thrust movement is a valuable technique to add to your sword fighting repertoire. It is especially useful when engaged with the opponent at close range. To execute the basic movement from a guard position, slash straight down your center line with the sword as if you were trying to cleave an opponent in half. As you perform the cut, bend your knees, and use your dropping body weight to assist in adding momentum to the slash. Finish the center slash with your blade held low and parallel to the ground and the tip still facing towards your imaginary target. Next, you will rise up from the squatting bent knee position as you execute an upward hooking thrust. This attack rises up underneath an adversary's guard and is very similar in motion to a boxer's uppercut strike. The uppercut travels at a slight angle as it rises, and hooks at the last minute into a position with the blade over your rear shoulder. The rear hand acts as a brake to slow the momentum of the uppercut by checking your sword arm near the biceps. The uppercut attack is an extremely aggressive and penetrating cut that can target a number of areas on an opponent's body including the neck, arm pit, groin, or face.

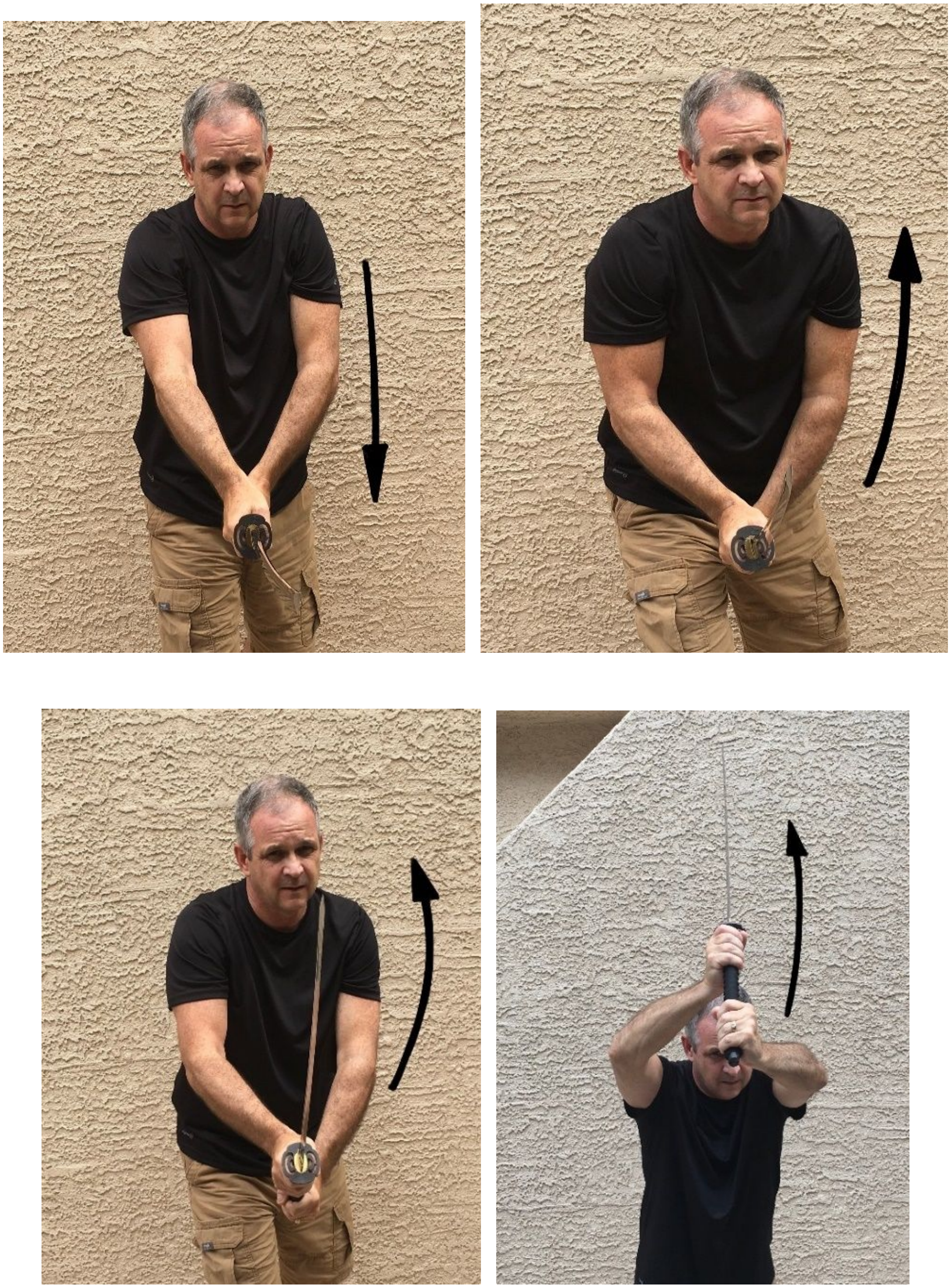




Movement #18- Two-Handed Version

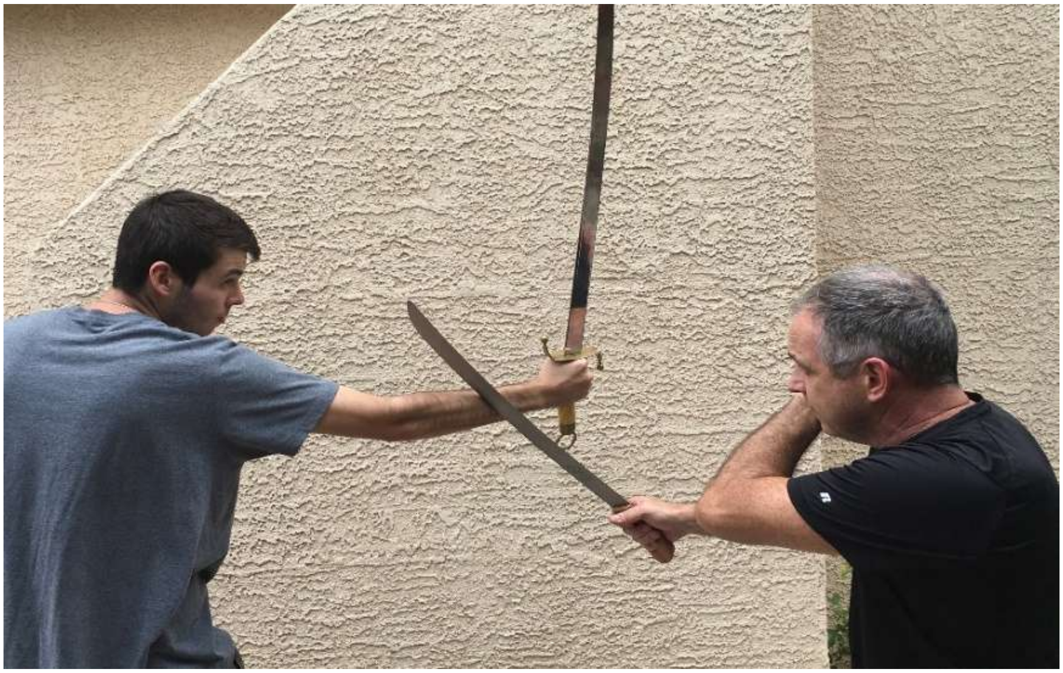
To execute the two-handed version of this drill, step forward and deliver a downward slash to the centerline. Bend your knees as you perform the slash to add power and momentum to the cut. When the downward slash ends, you should be in a semi-crouched position with the sword blade parallel to the ground and the point facing forward. Your back should be as straight as possible with your head held up. Straighten your legs as you execute the uppercut attack back up the center line in the exact opposite path that it traveled for the downward slash. Keep your eyes forward throughout the movement as if watching an imaginary opponent who is standing in front of you. You can repeat the entire movement for multiple repetitions to develop explosive power and to strengthen your lower back and legs. It is important to raise the tip of the sword blade up slightly just before you execute the uppercut attack.

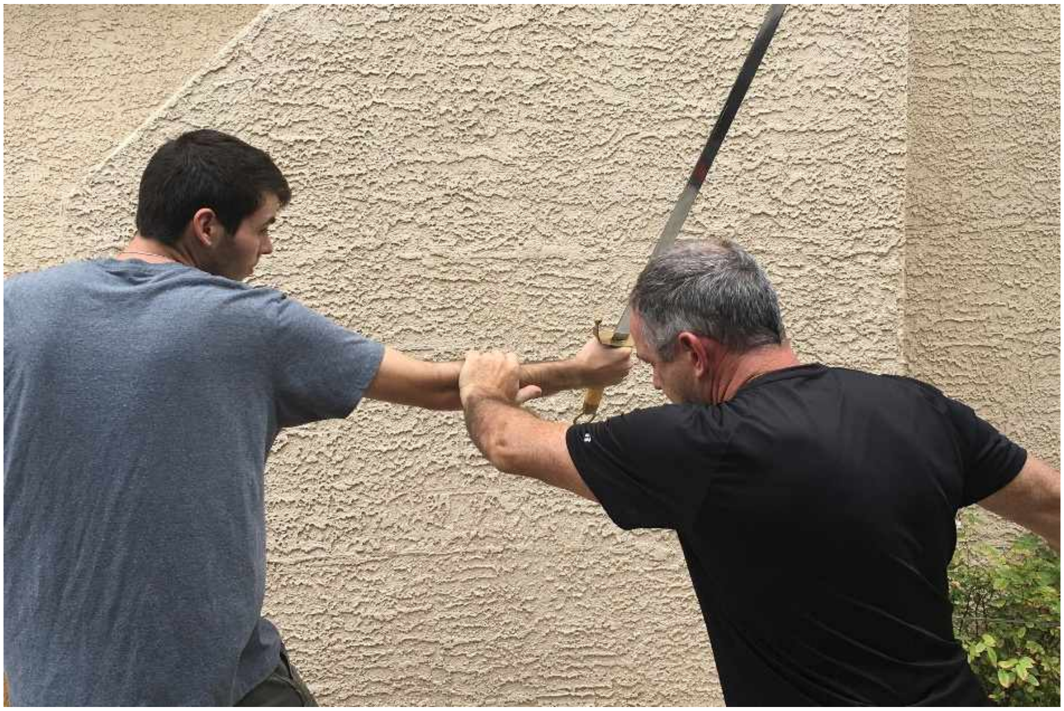


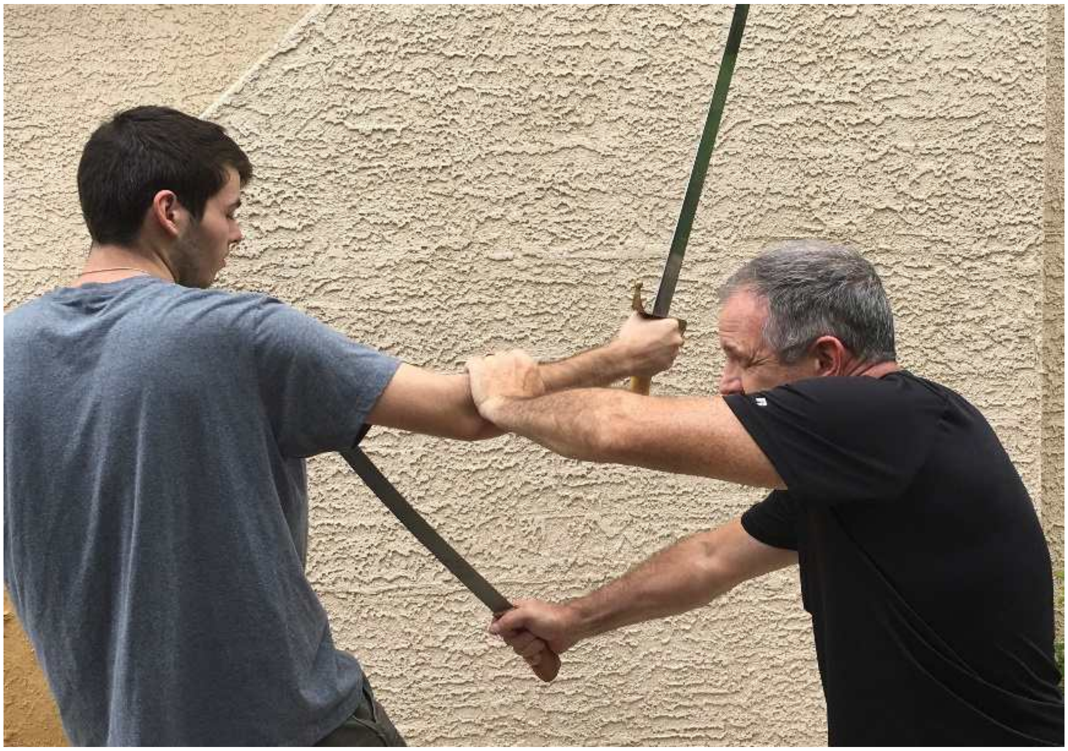


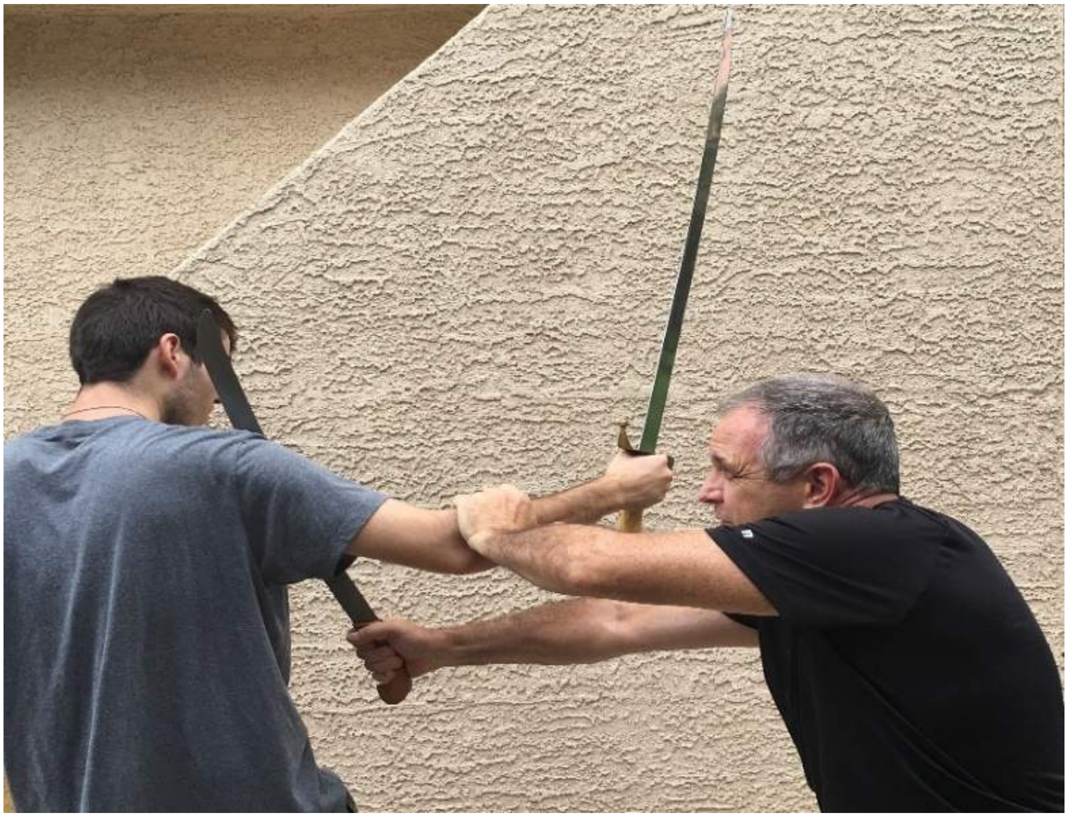
Movement #18- Application

In the below series of photographs, the opponent enters with a downward slash. The defender steps off line and uses a downward center slash to attack his weapon arm. He immediately checks the opponent's arm near the elbow and launches an uppercut thrust to his armpit or into the neck and face. The entire technique is executed in about one second.





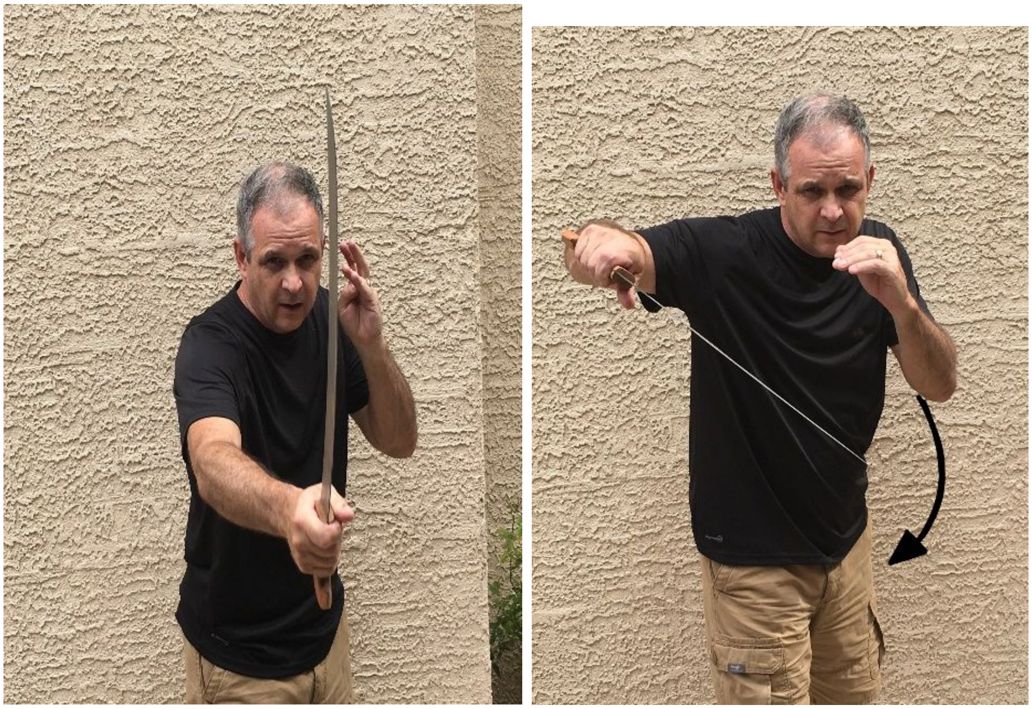


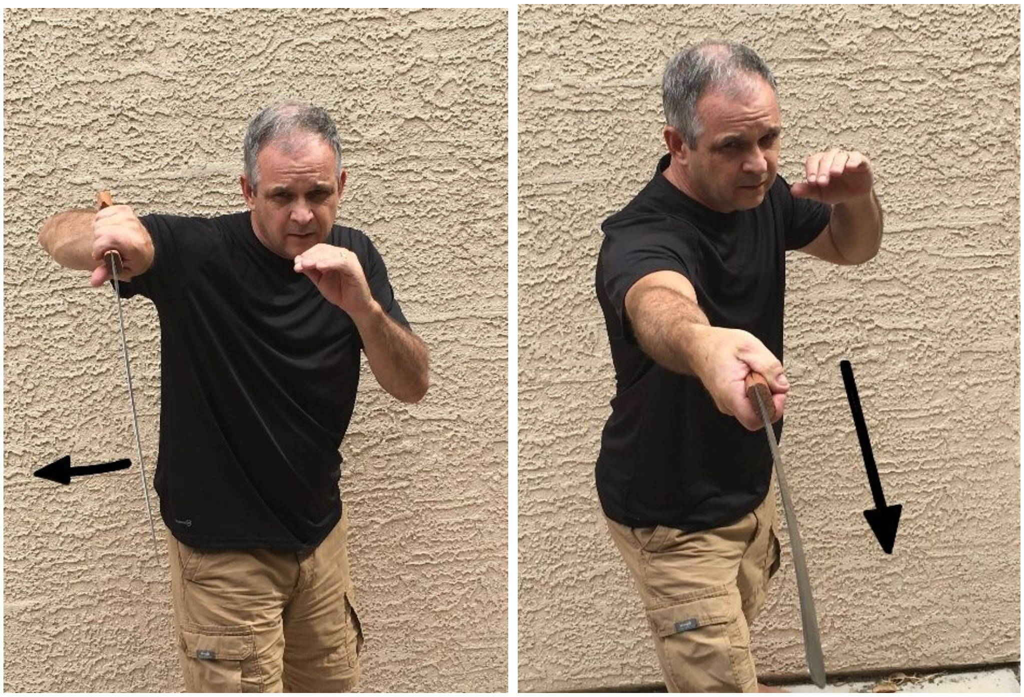


Movement #19

Circle Blade Deflection and Thrust

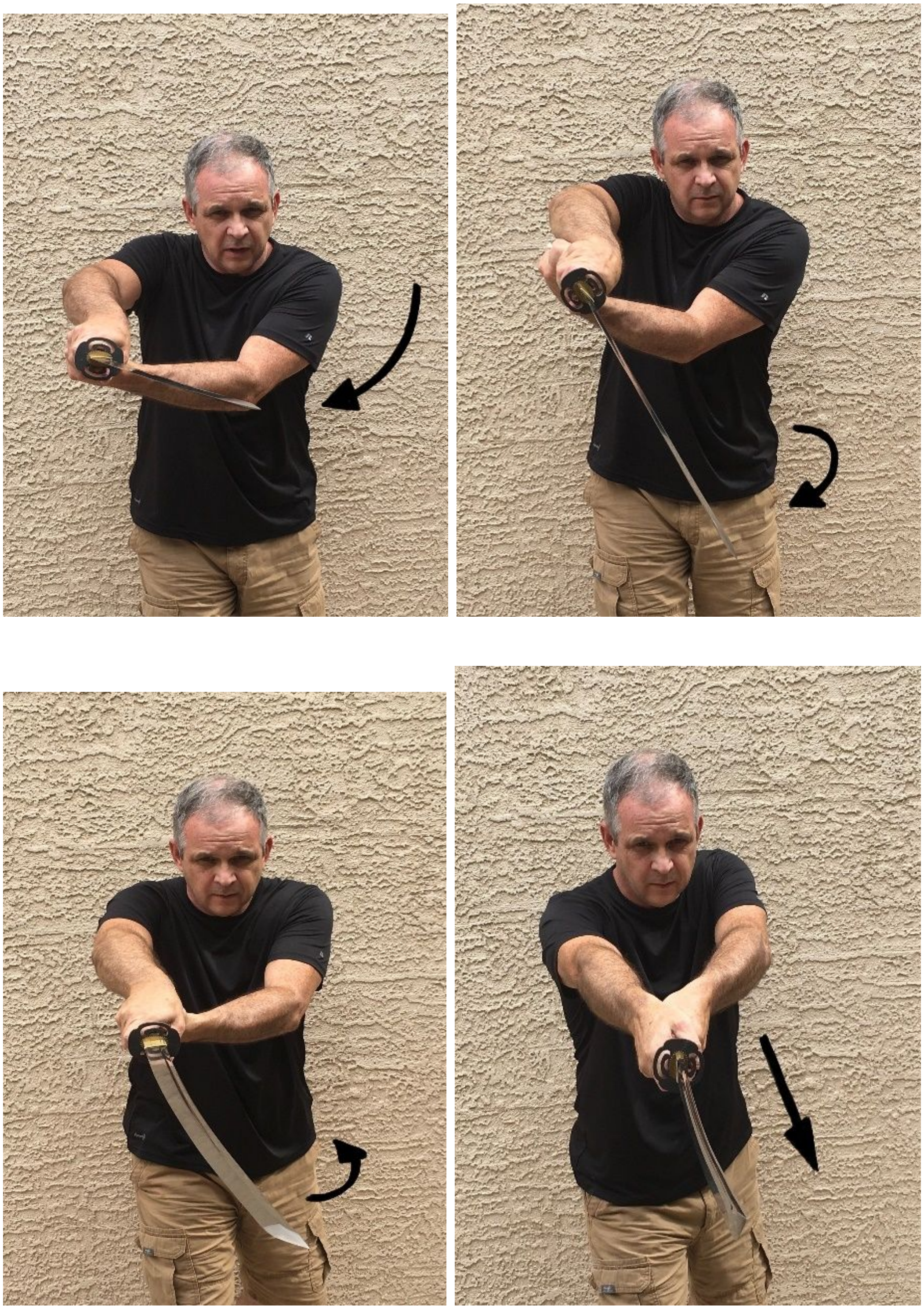
Movement #19 is very useful for moving an opponent’s sword blade offline and launching a thrusting attack. To perform the movement from a guard position, move the tip of the sword downward and to the outside of your body in an arc. At the completion of the arcing motion, immediately thrust forward with the blade. As you execute the thrust, step forward with your lead leg and rotate your wrist inward so that the blade is pointed back towards the ground. Immediately step back and recover your guard position following the thrust. Once you have become proficient with this technique, you should experiment with different footwork and lunging in deeper as you perform the thrust.





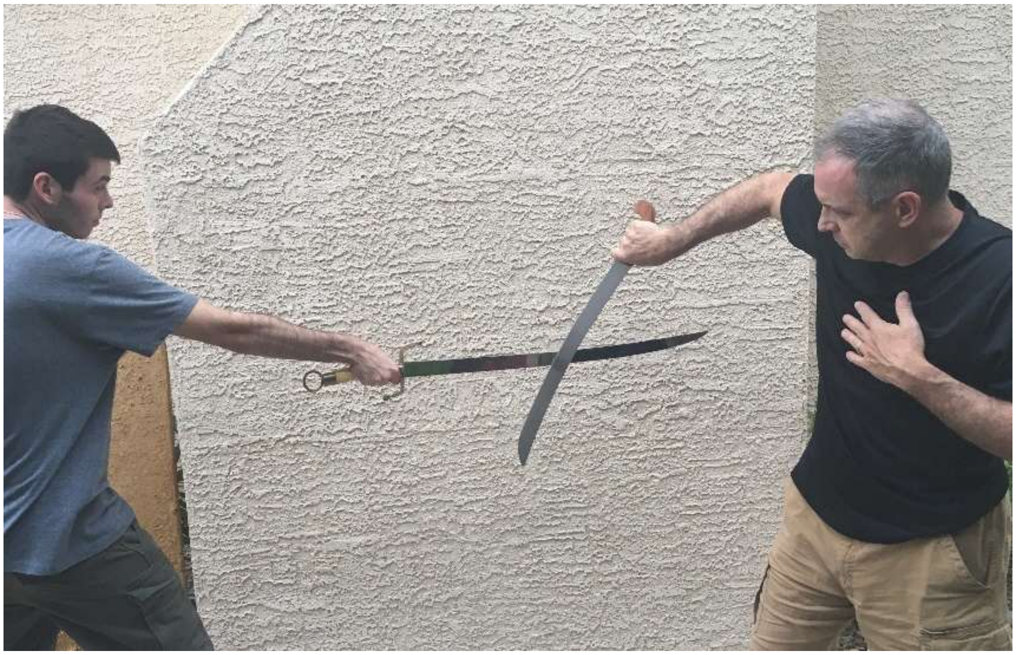
Movement # 19- Two-Handed version

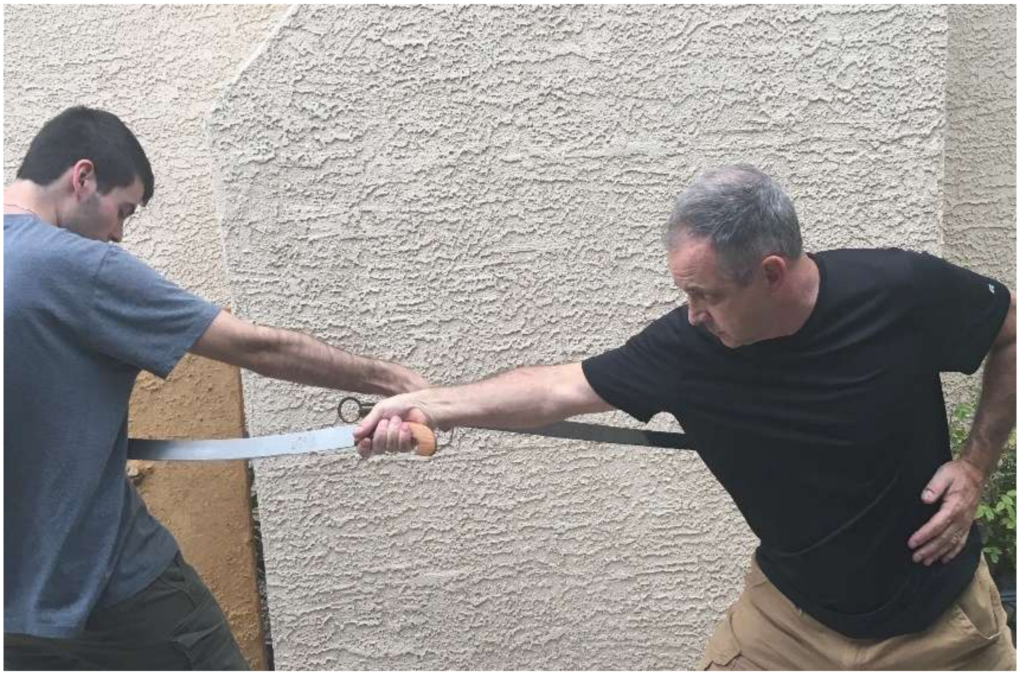
To execute the two-handed version of this motion, start from a guard position. Rotate the blade of the sword towards the outside of your body. Most of the rotational movement of the sword takes place near the tip of the blade. Once you have completed the rotation of the blade, immediately thrust forward with the sword. The blade rotates back to the center as you thrust, so the sharp edge of the blade is pointed towards the ground as you complete the attack. Step forward with your lead leg as you execute the thrust and quickly recover to the guard position after the attack is finished. As you perform this motion, do not think of the circular deflection as a strike on the opponent's blade. Instead, think of it as a scooping action to redirect his sword to the side and create an opening for the thrusting attack. It is a subtle action that is intended to move the enemy's sword offline before he realizes what has happened. After you have this technique down, experiment with a simple variation of the thrusting movement where you keep the edge of your blade glued to the opponent's sword and stick to his weapon as you execute the thrust. This is a more advance movement that requires you to maintain contact on the opponent's sword throughout the thrusting technique.



Movement #19- Application

The below photographs show one application of the circle blade deflection and thrust movement. The defender circles his sword blade to the outside to deflect an incoming thrust from the attacker. Simultaneously, he steps off of the line of attack. Once contact is made with the opponent's blade, the defender sticks to it as he makes the circling motion with his sword. Without a break in movement or momentum, the defender lunges in with a thrust to the opponent's body. He immediately recovers to a guard position to protect himself (not shown in the photos).



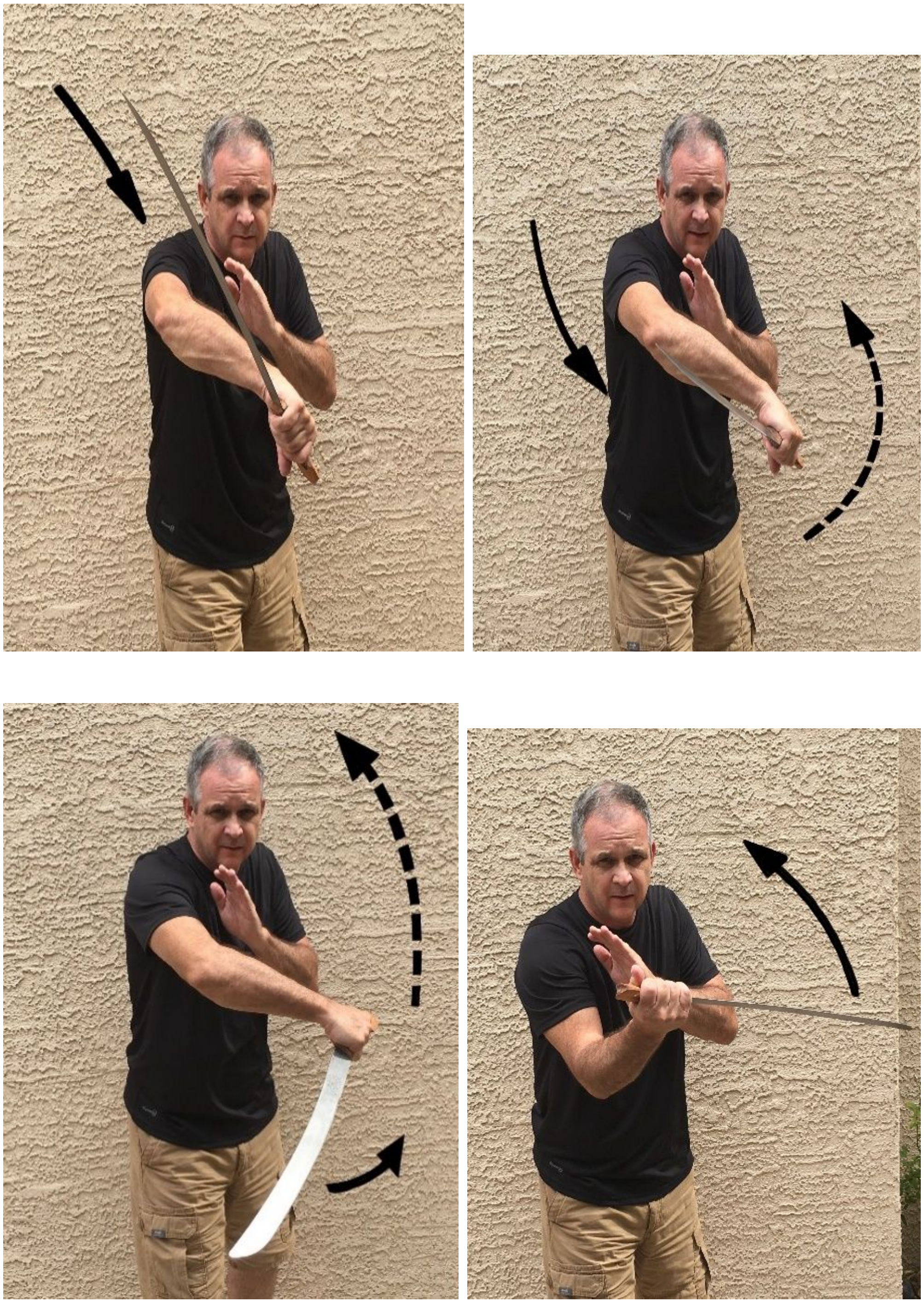


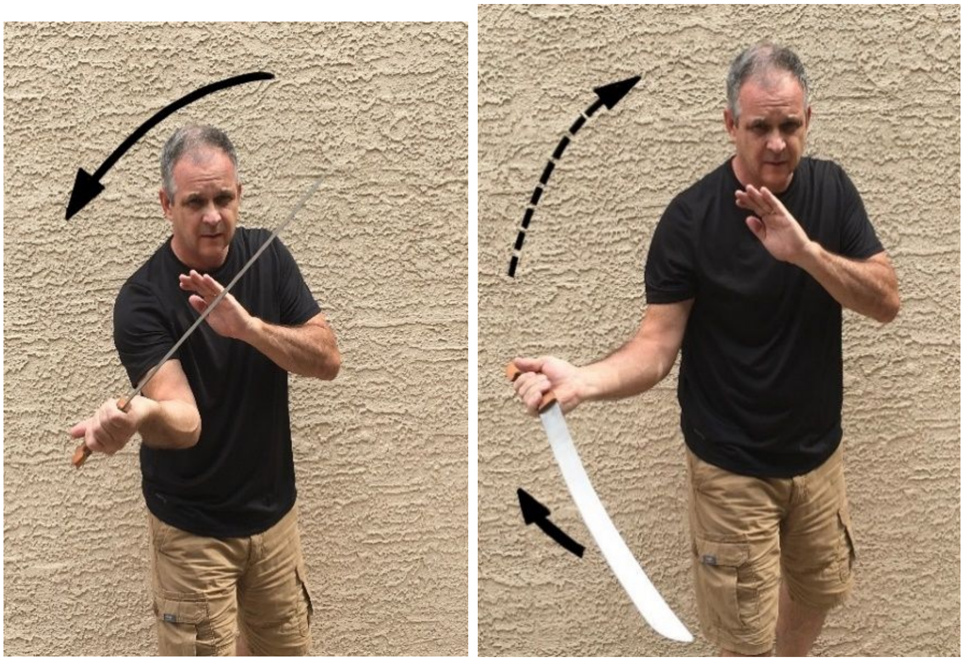
Movement #20

Reverse Grip Downward Figure Eight

The final motion we will cover in this book is the reverse grip downward figure eight. It is very important to practice sword fighting techniques from a variety of grips and positions. In some instances, you might find yourself holding the sword in a reverse grip. This could happen as the result of disarming an opponent's weapon, or from retrieving a sword you have suddenly dropped. In any case, you will usually not have time to change your grip in the middle of an exchange of cuts with your enemy. You must be able to fight from any grip you happen to acquire. The downward figure eight is an excellent movement to train cutting motions with a reverse grip because of the angles involved in the technique. The below photos show this motion being performed with a one-handed sword.

From a reverse grip, execute a downward diagonal slash. As the blade completes its motion, rotate the sword upward along the opposite side of your body. When the blade gets to about shoulder level, execute a downward diagonal slash along the opposite side of your body. At the completion of the second downward slash, rotate the blade upward and repeat the previous movements. When performed in one fluid motion, the downward diagonal slashes form a figure eight motion.

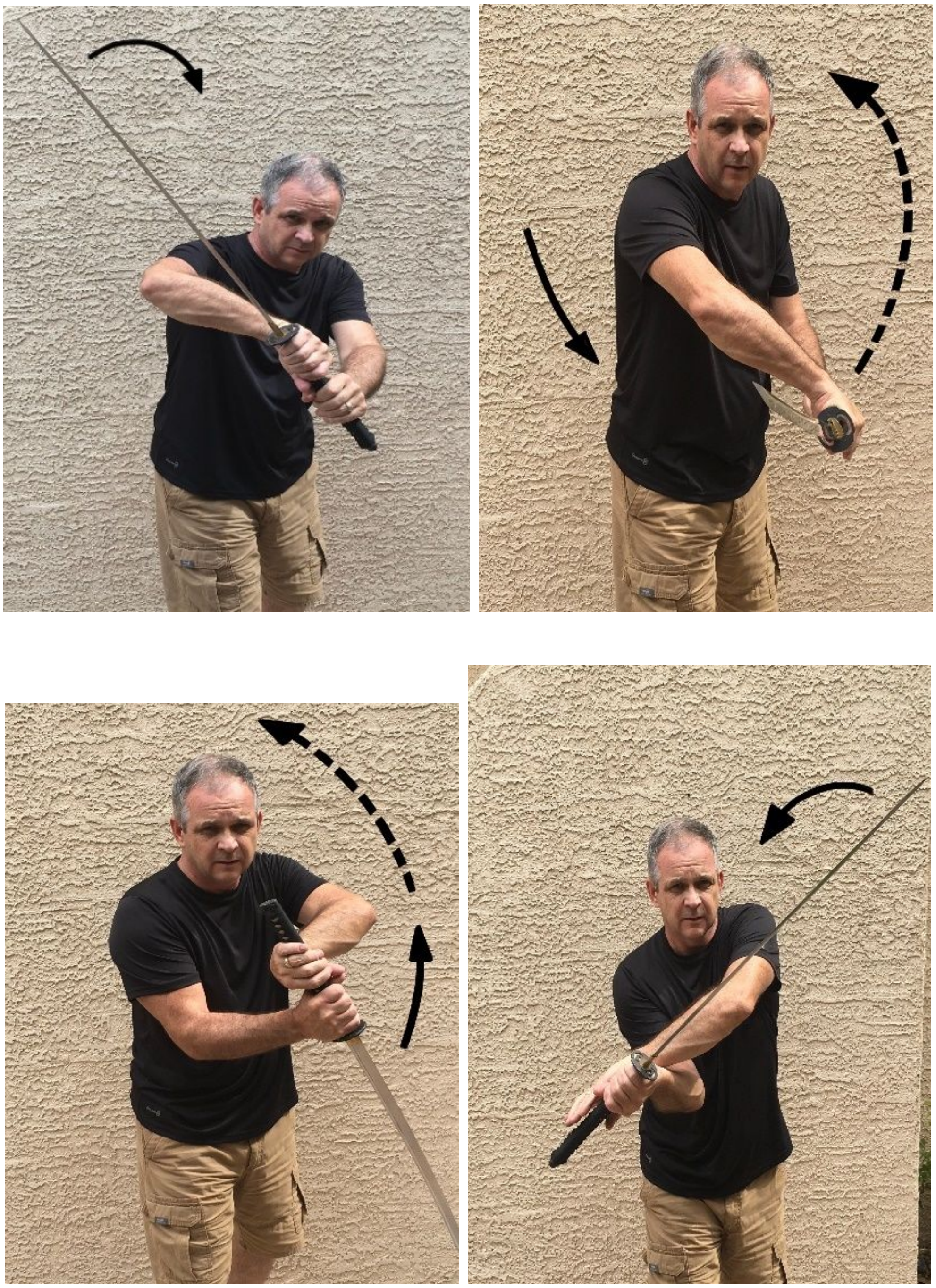


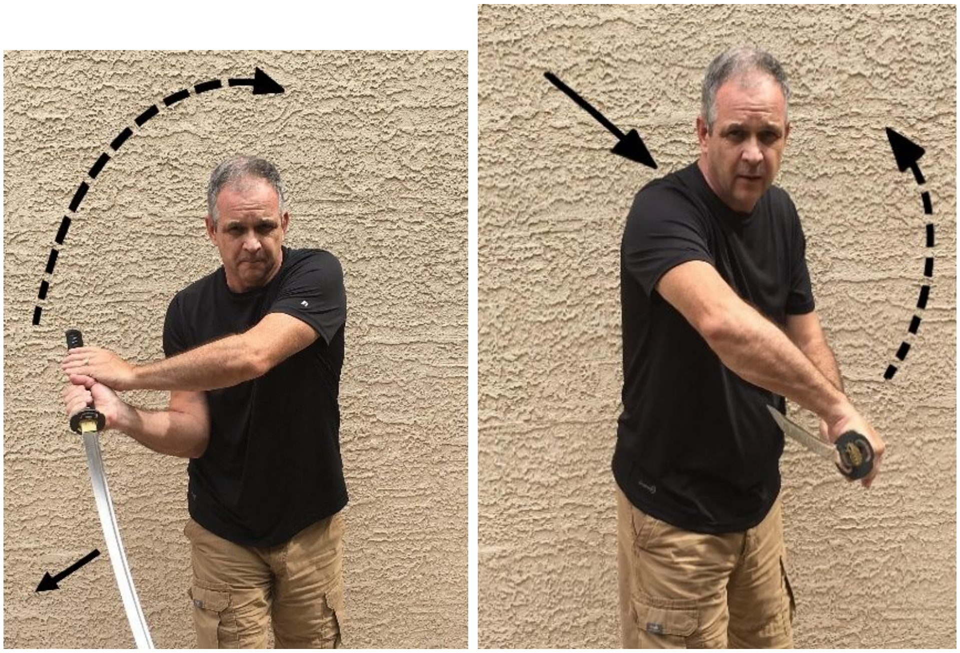


Movement #20- Two-Handed Version

To perform the reverse grip downward figure eight with a two-handed sword, draw the sword in a reverse grip and execute a downward diagonal slash. As the blade drops to around waist level, rotate your wrist so your hands are in a palm up position and allow the point of the sword to come up on your weak side. Flow into a downward diagonal slash on your weak side. As the sword reaches waist level on your strong side, rotate your wrists so your hands are palm down and allow the tip of the sword to come up on your strong side. Continue this movement to create a figure eight cutting pattern.

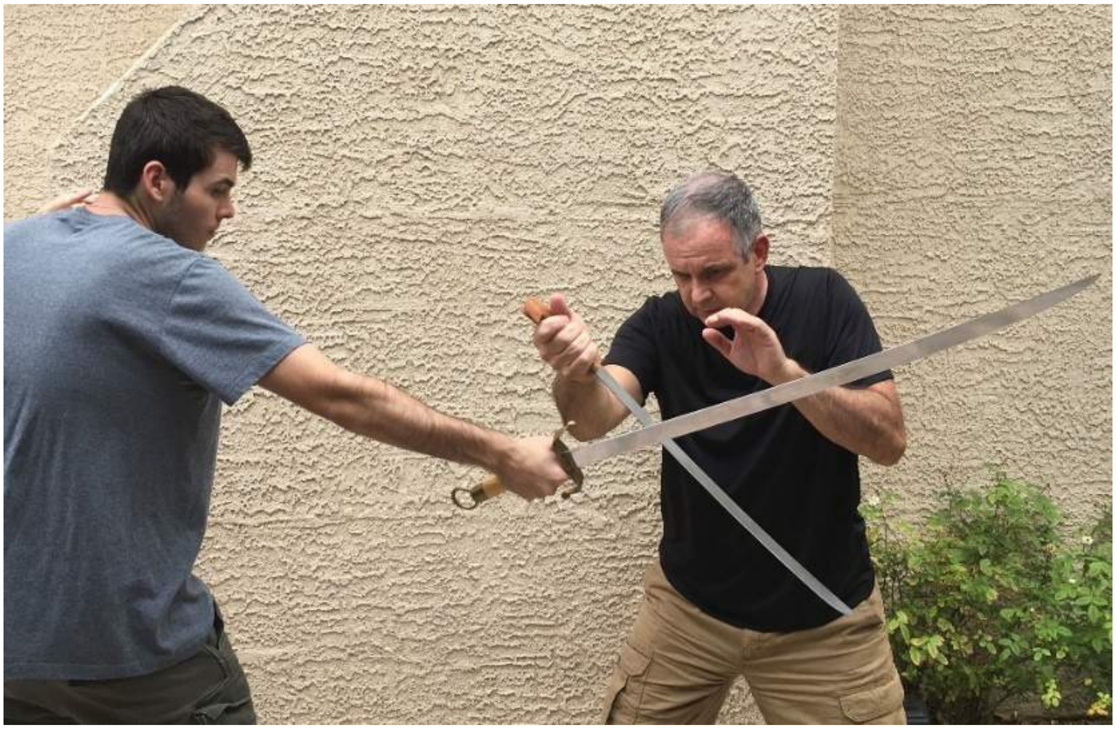
At first the reverse grip can be difficult to hold throughout the entire figure eight motion, but once your wrists loosen up it will become easier. It is ok to slightly release your grip with the weak hand as you execute the movement as long as you maintain a firm grip with the strong hand throughout the entire technique. If you impact a target while holding the sword with a weak grip you will risk having the weapon dislodged from your hands.

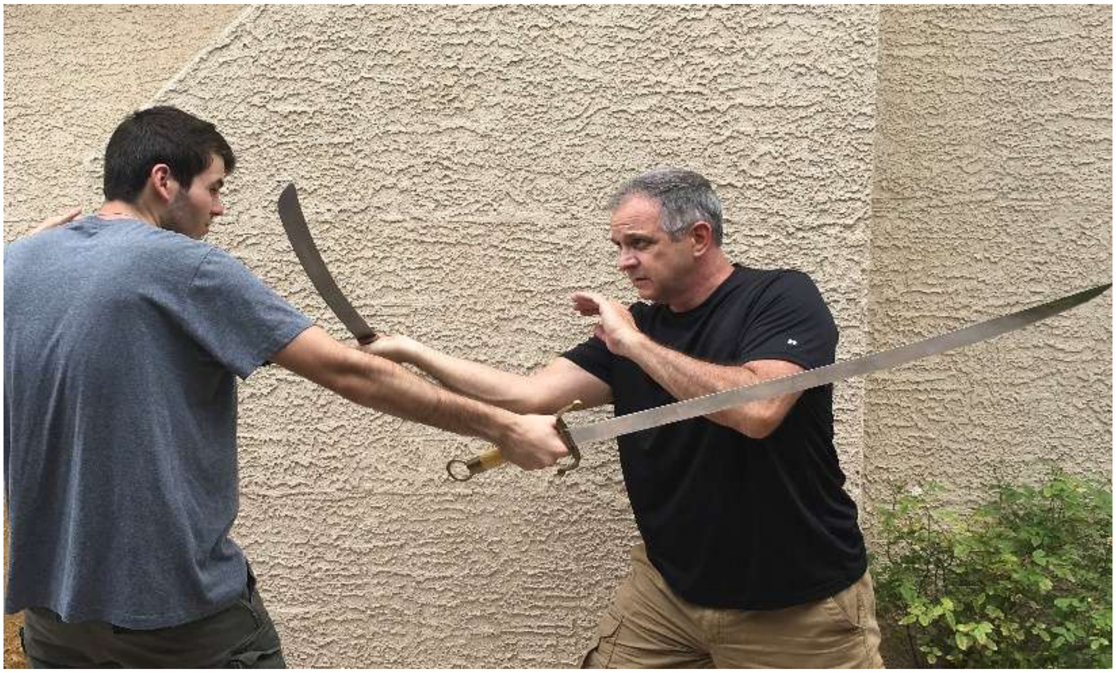


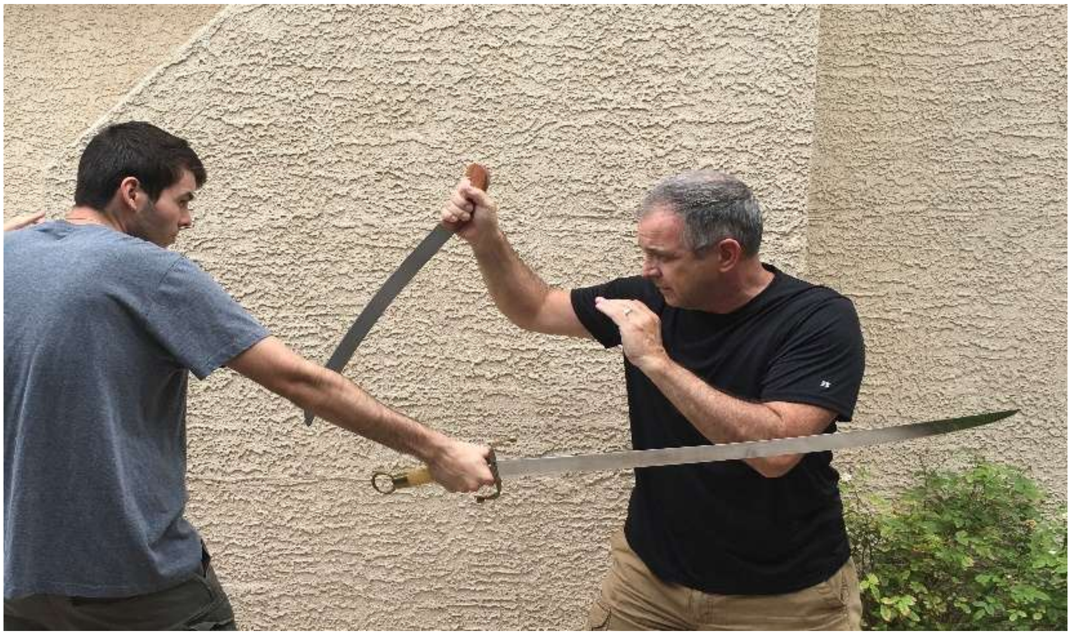


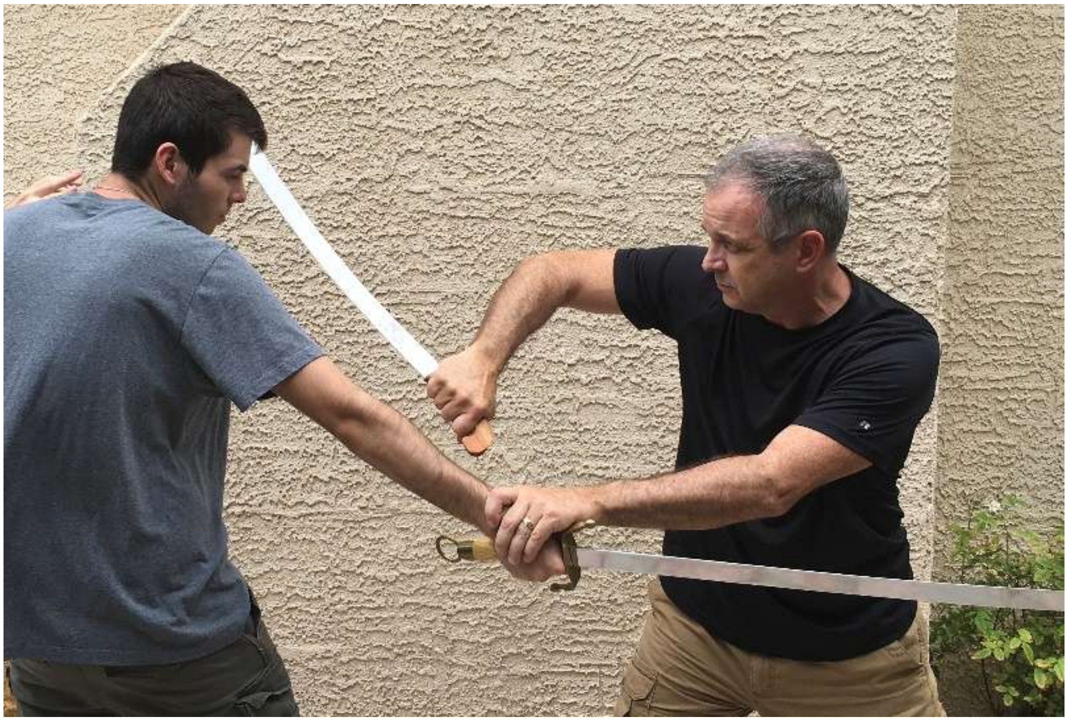
Movement #20- Application

From a reverse grip, the defender uses his blade to deflect an incoming thrust from the attacker. He then flows into a downward diagonal cut to the right side of the attacker's neck followed by a downward diagonal cut to the left side of his neck. The defender checks the opponent's weapon hand as he enters and delivers the final slash. The entire sequence of movements is executed in rapid succession without a break in motion.









Beyond the Basic Movements

You now have twenty highly effective sword movements to add to your fighting system. But you should not be content with simply learning and practicing these movements in their basic forms. There are a number of ways that you can take these simple movements and expand upon them to enhance your sword skills. In this chapter we will look at several methods you can use to take the twenty movements from the previous chapter to the next level.

Building a Strong Foundation

We touched on this concept earlier, but it is so important that I want to break it down here again and solidify it in your mind. If you do not build a solid foundation with the twenty movements, then the rest of the concepts in this chapter will be meaningless to you. The below steps are required to form the strong foundation to go beyond the basic movements. Obviously when working with a partner and sparring, proper safety equipment and protocol must be used at all times to prevent injury.

Step #1- Learn the movements.

Step #2- Practice the movements until they become second nature.

Step #3- Practice the applications slowly with a cooperative partner.

Step #4- Practice the applications faster with partial resistance.

Step #5- Practice the applications at full speed with resistance.

Step #6- Apply the movements spontaneously in sparring.

The first three steps should be done before you start to delve into the concepts presented in this chapter however, steps four through six will continue to be a work in progress as your skills improve. You also don’t need to master all twenty movements. You can focus on a few techniques at a time to develop your skills. Once your movements are functioning well at around steps three and four, it is time to add the concepts we will discuss in this chapter.

All of the concepts we will discuss should be applied to each of the above steps. If you seriously work on all of the above steps, you will have a functional and pressure tested sword fighting system at your disposal.

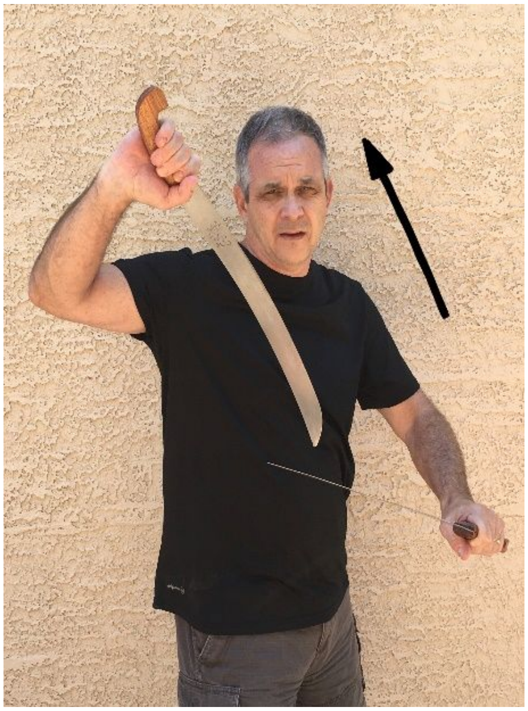
Combinations

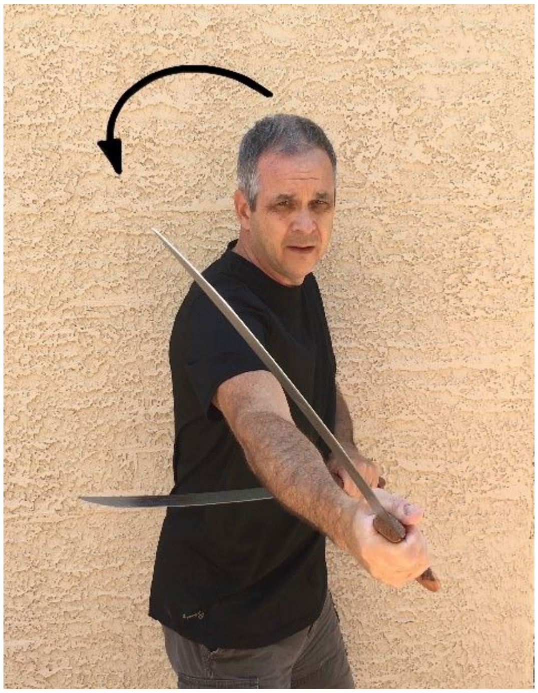
Once you have the twenty movements down, start to practice them in combinations. First, mix two or three movements together and then start to add additional movements until you are performing combinations of six or seven movements at a time. As you can see, by randomly mixing the twenty movements up into various combinations, you have literally millions of possible combinations you could utilize. This process of practicing random combinations of the movements will also develop your ability to free flow and react spontaneously with attacks and defense.

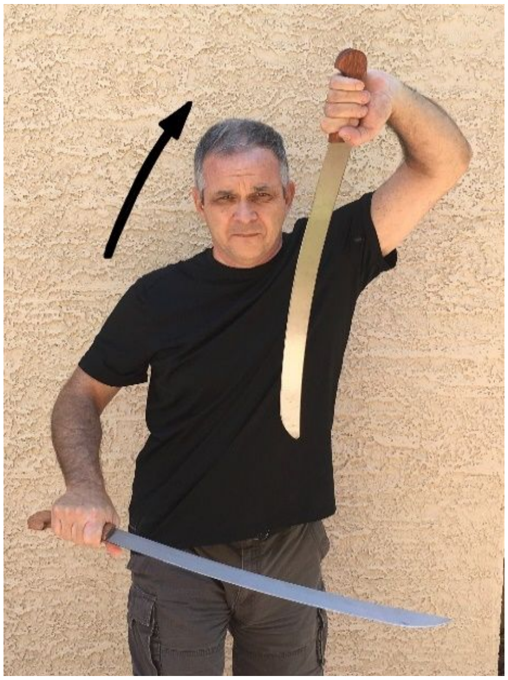
Double Swords

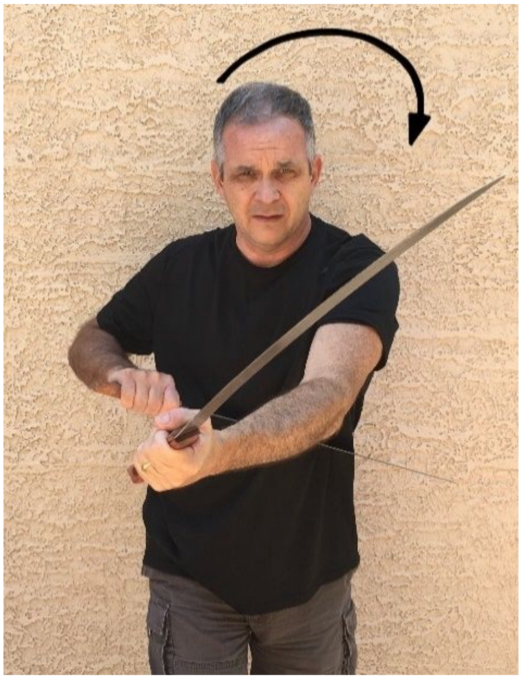
One of the best ways to take your sword skills to another level and improve your coordination is by doing all of the movements you have learned with double swords. This allows you to practice the movements on both sides of your body without pausing or changing grips. It also strengthens your weak hand and gives you the ability to use each weapon independently of one another.

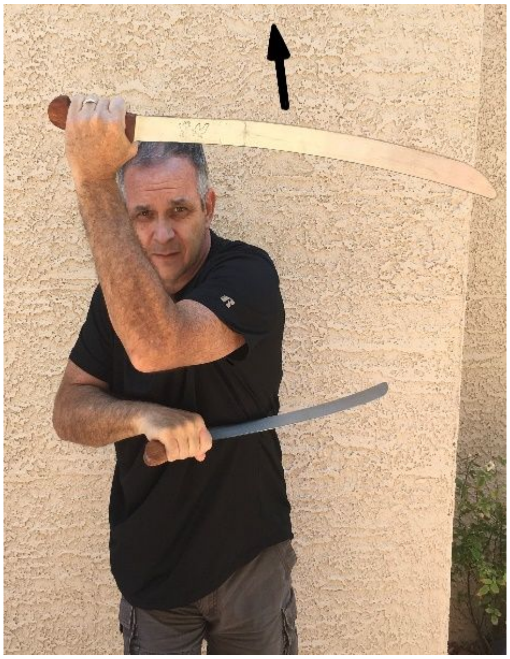
The below series of photographs show the sword practitioner demonstrating the above two concepts together by practicing combinations of the movements while utilizing two swords. He starts by executing a draw to chest and downward diagonal cut (movement #1) to both the right and left sides followed by a shield cover and downward diagonal cut (movement #3) on each side. He finishes the combination with the hack and jab (movement #9). The entire combination flows together fluidly without a break in motion.

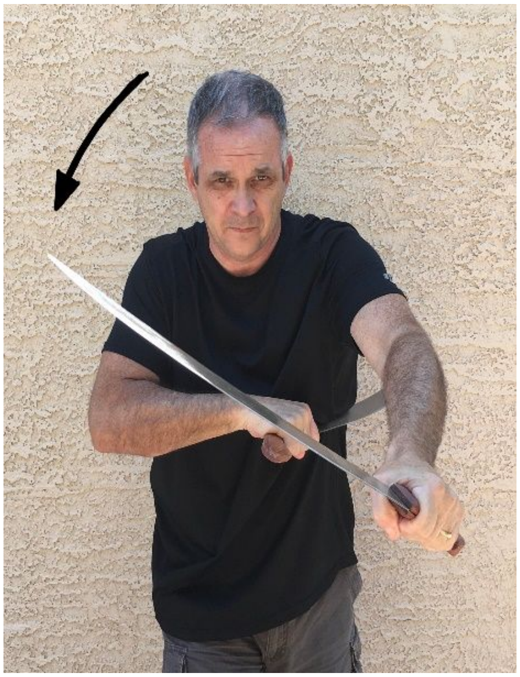


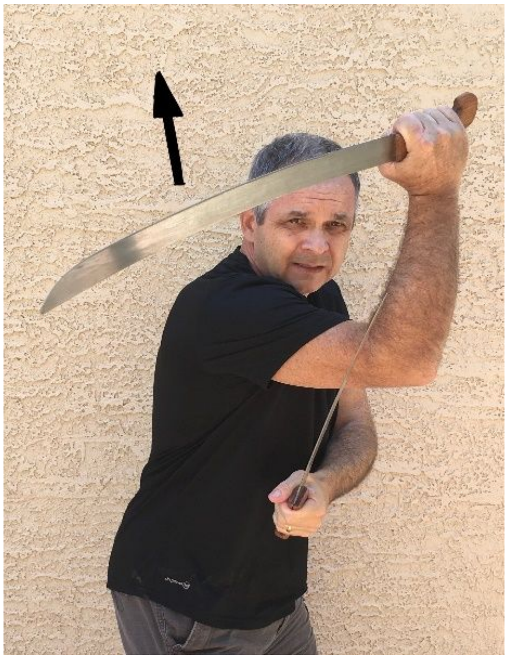


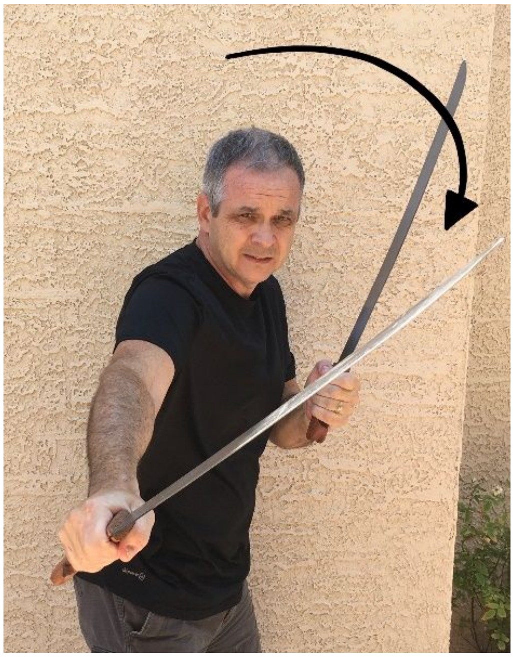


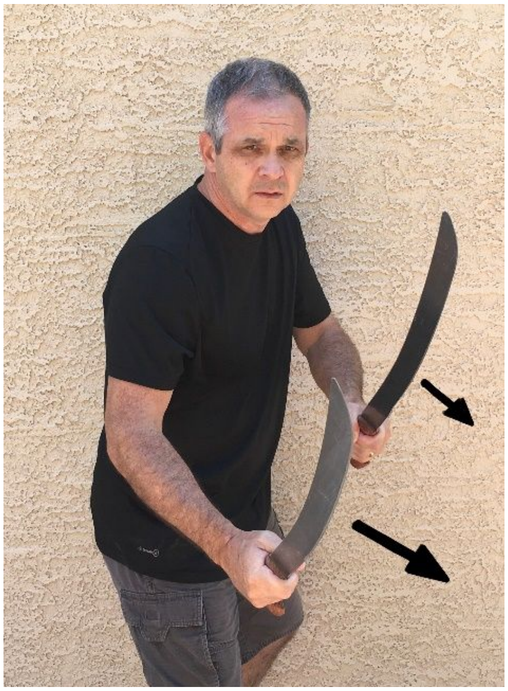


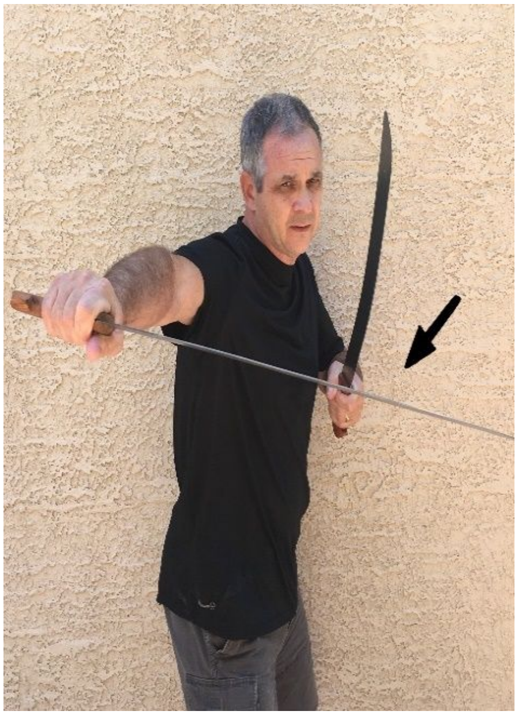








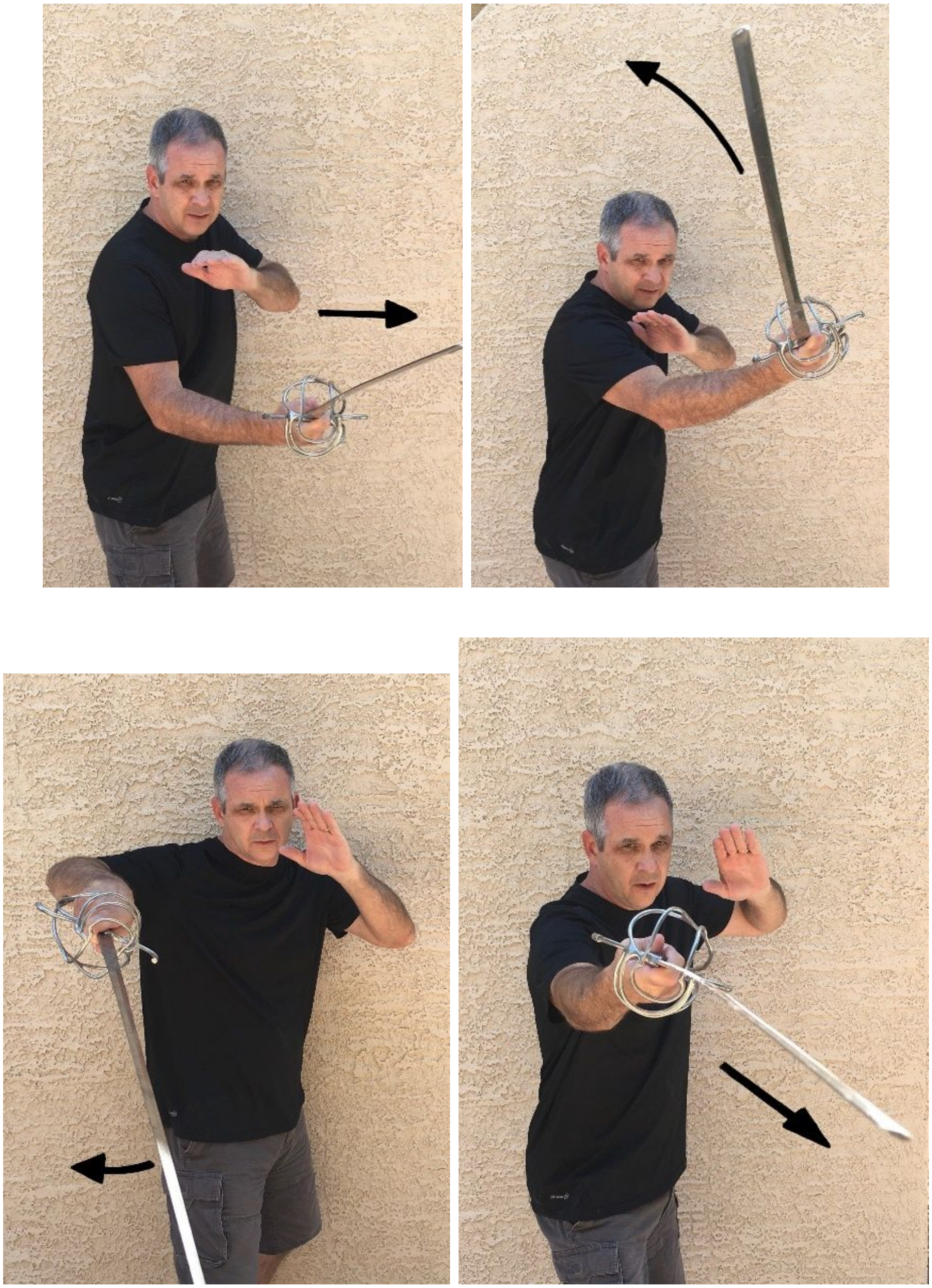


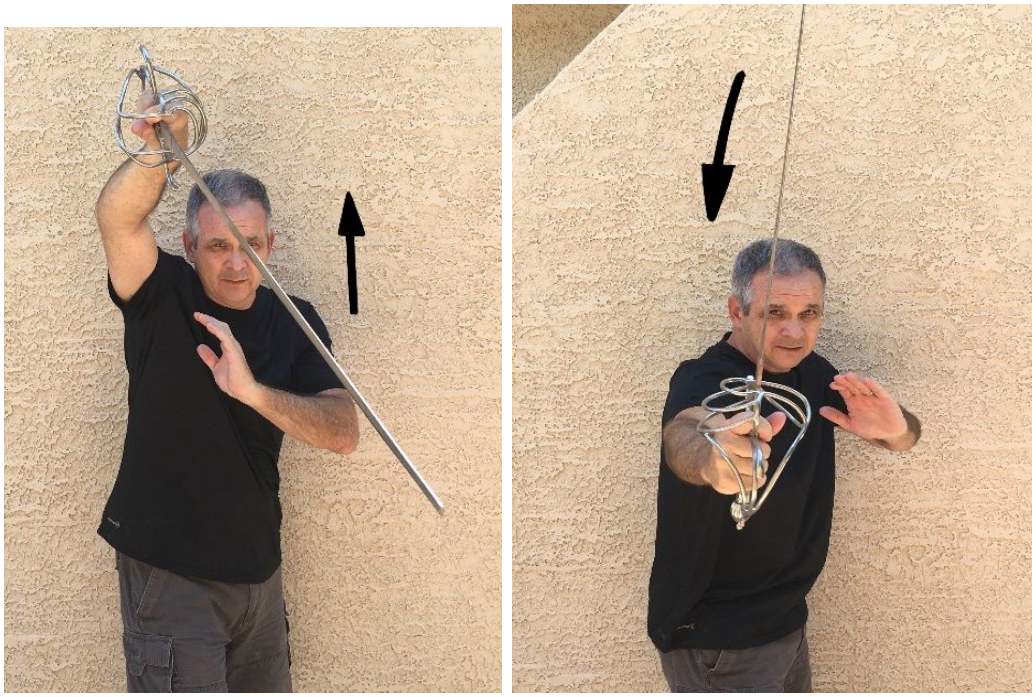


Beyond Your Comfort Zone

Most sword practitioners have a weapon of preference and are comfortable with a specific style of blade fighting. Although I have studied various sword fighting systems over the years, I am most comfortable with the Filipino martial arts. It is easy to default to the techniques and weapons that you are most comfortable with, but if you break beyond your comfort zone and practice the twenty movements with different types of swords, you will gain knowledge, improve your skill, and have fun doing it. If your weapon of choice is a katana, practice the movements with a broadsword or a saber. If you normally train with a machete, make a point to perform the movements with a kris or a Chinese jian.

The below photographs demonstrate a combination of several movements done with the classical rapier. Because I rarely practice with this weapon, going beyond my comfort zone and incorporating it into my training will enhance my overall skill. Notice how some of the movements must be slightly modified for the rapier style of combat. The sword practitioner begins with an inside cut and outside hook thrust (movement #6) followed by a circle blade deflection and thrust (movement #19). He then finishes the combination of techniques with a roof cover and slash down the center (movement #4).

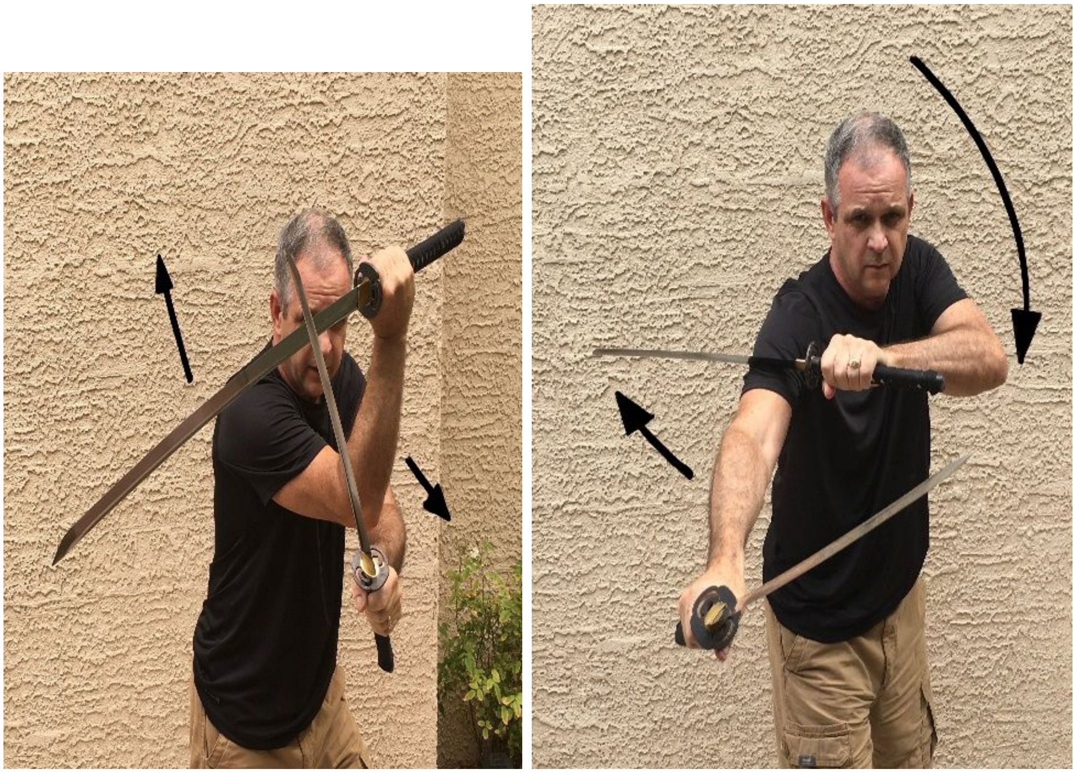


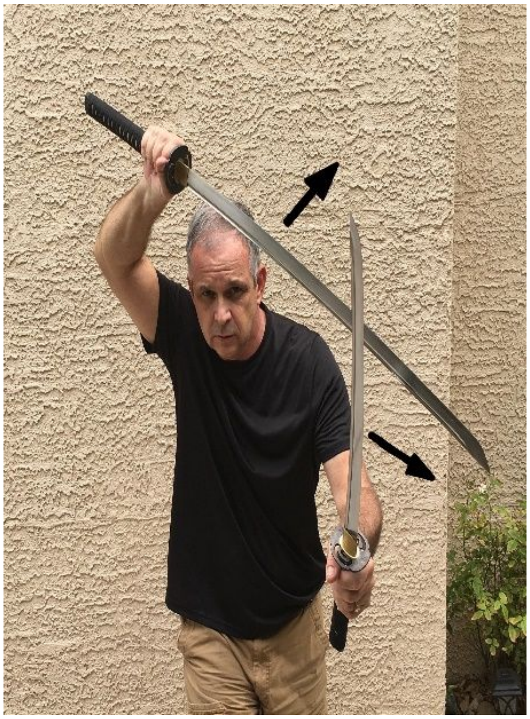


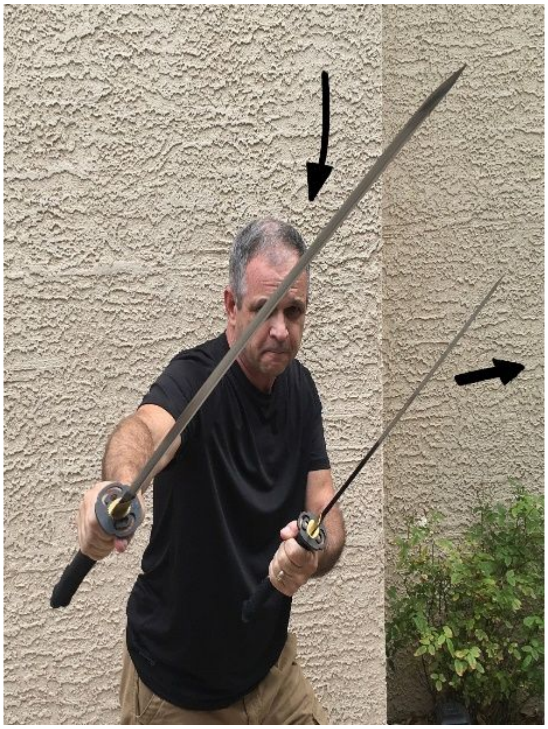
Long and Short Swords Together

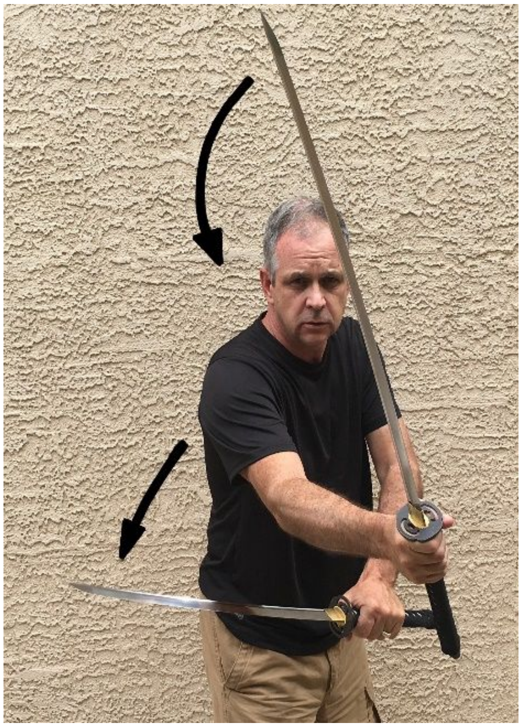
Another excellent way to build on your sword skills is to practice the twenty basic movements with both the long and short swords together. This practice builds a unique dexterity in your movements. The following photographs show a combination of movements being executed with both the long katana and the short Japanese blade called a waskizashi. When using a sword in each hand, you can execute one of the twenty movements with your lead weapon and a different movement with your rear weapon. As you read the description of the following combination with the long and short sword, see if you can identify the specific movements that are being used. All of the techniques come from the basic twenty movements we have studied.

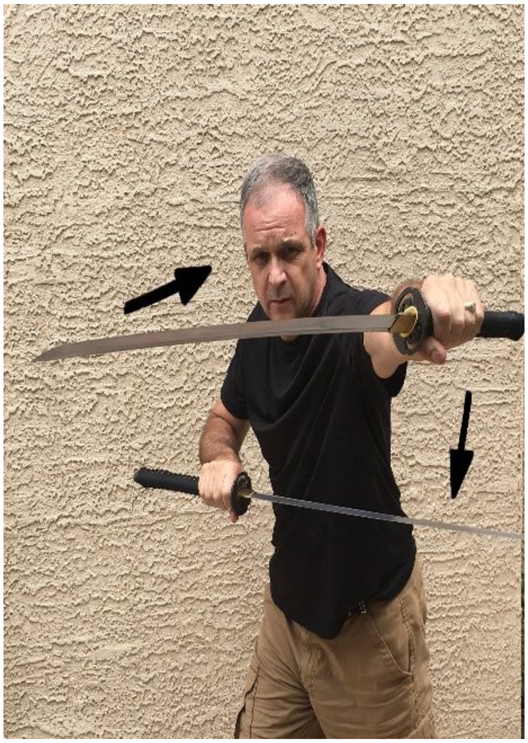
The sword practitioner begins the combination by executing a shield cover with the long sword while hacking forward with the short sword. He then executes a downward diagonal slash with the long sword and a back cut with the short sword. Without a break in motion, the sword practitioner flows into a roof cover with the long sword as he executes a diagonal slash with the short sword. Directly from the roof cover, he executes half of a V cut with the long sword as he uses the short sword for a back cut. The sword practitioner then presses with the short sword as he completes the second half of the V cut. The combination ends with a pressing movement of the long sword and a jab with the short sword. The entire combination seems complicated; however, the movements are actually very natural and simple when performed. Pay close attention to the photographs and practice slow until you get them down. Your ultimate goal is to be able to flow with any of the movements from any position, with any hand, and with any weapon.





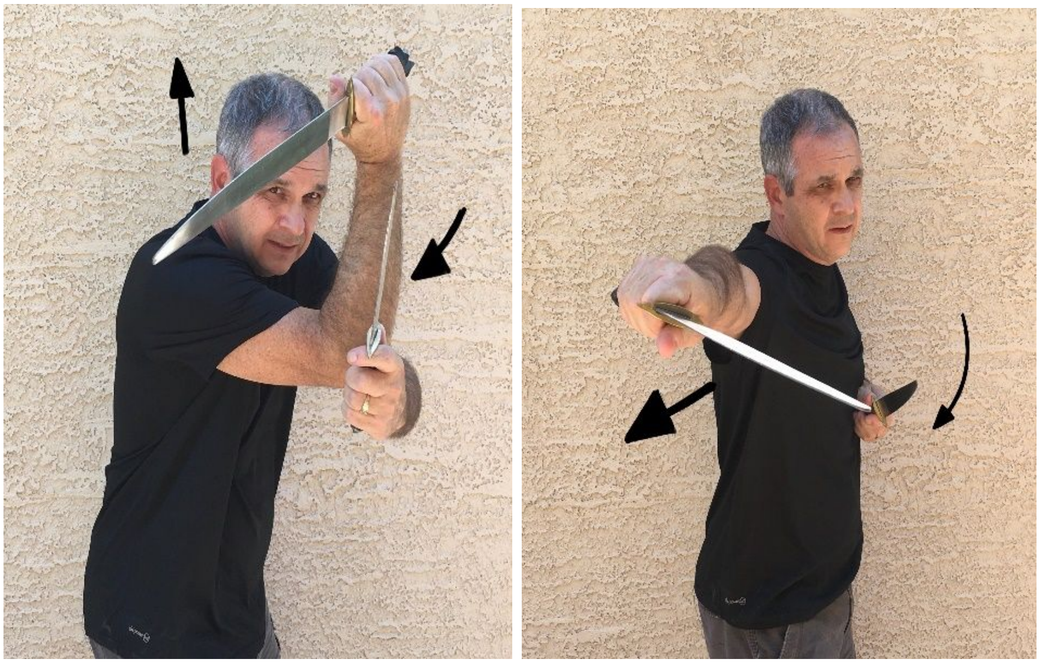


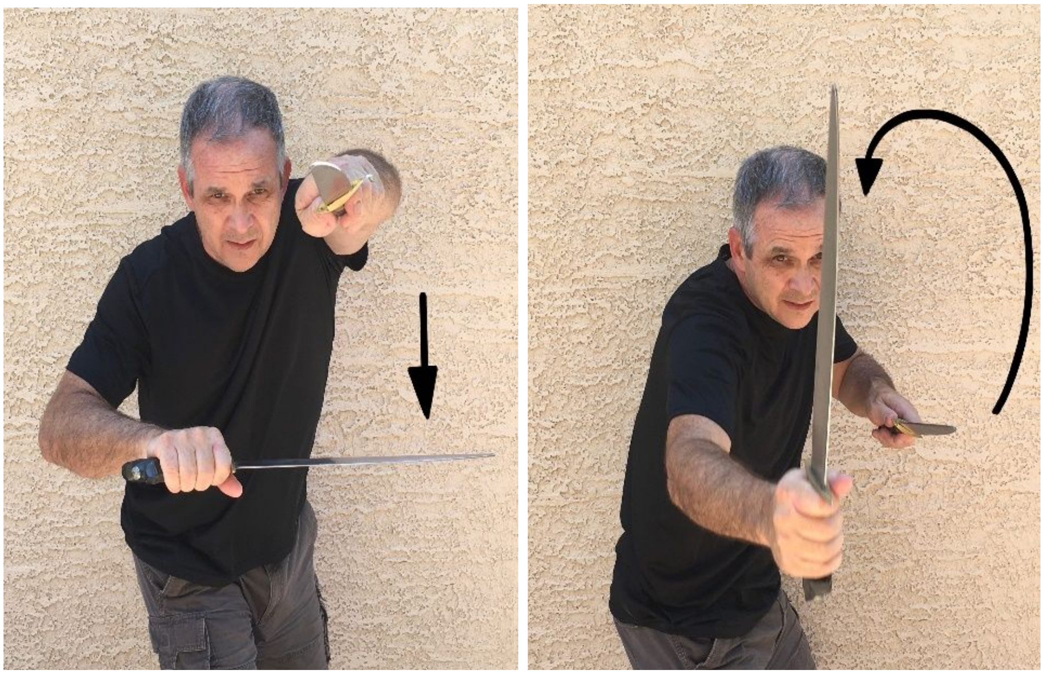




Sword and Dagger

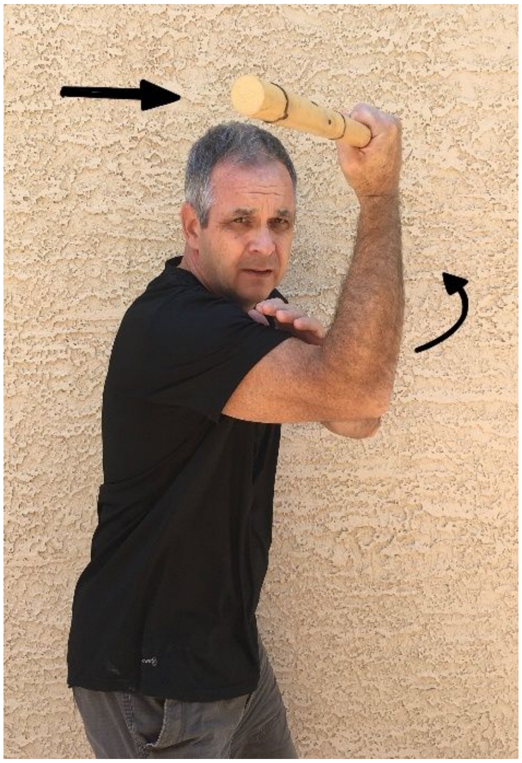
Along the same lines as executing the movements with the long and short sword, you should also practice the movements with a sword in your strong hand and a dagger in your weak hand. Sword and dagger techniques were an integral part of historical sword fighting systems and continue to be practiced today. The below pictures show a short combination of the movements with a short sword and dagger. The practitioner starts the combination with a roof cover while checking forward with the dagger. He then executes a jab with the sword followed by a press down and overhand thrust with the dagger. He completes the combination with a circular cutting motion. All of these techniques are contained within the twenty basic movements.

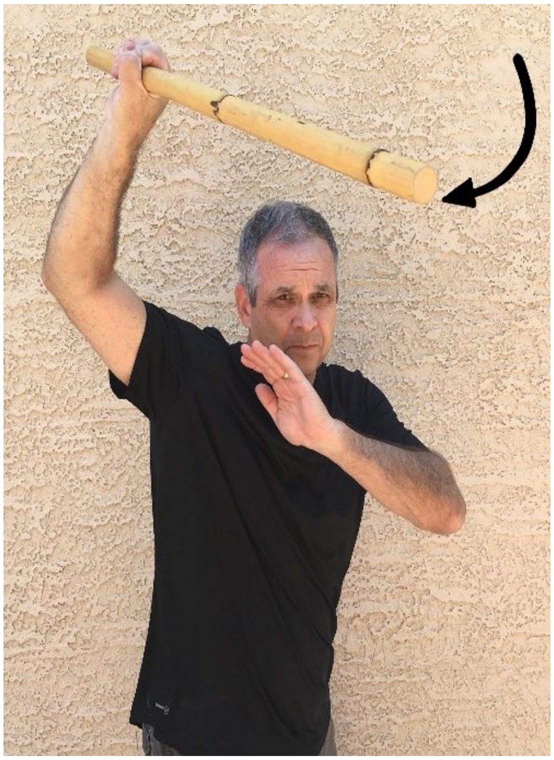


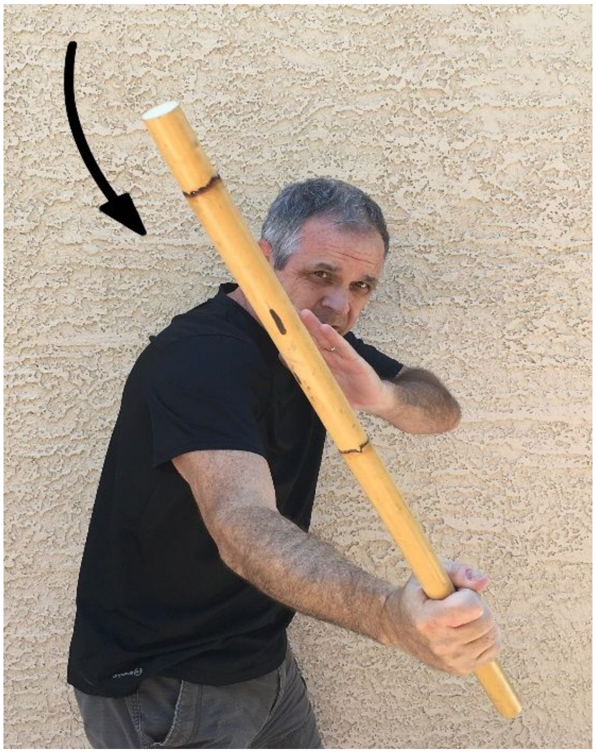


Other Weapon Types

The beauty of the twenty basic movements is that you don’t need a sword to practice them. You can execute all of the movements with any type of weapon from an axe, staff, or a stick. You can even do the movements with your empty hands. The below example shows a combination of the movements done with a stick. The practitioner begins the combination with a fanning motion of the stick. He flows from the fanning movement into a downward diagonal strike. The concepts and movements are almost identical with a stick as they are with a blade. When you practice with a weapon other than the sword, be sure that you remain aware of where the blade would be if the weapon was a sword. This will ensure the integrity of the movements. You obviously have to generate more power with a non-bladed weapon to cause damage. This can be done by adding additional movement of your waist, legs, shoulders, arms, and hips. When practicing the movements with an impact weapon, you can execute the techniques on a heavy bag, or a tree to help generate power.

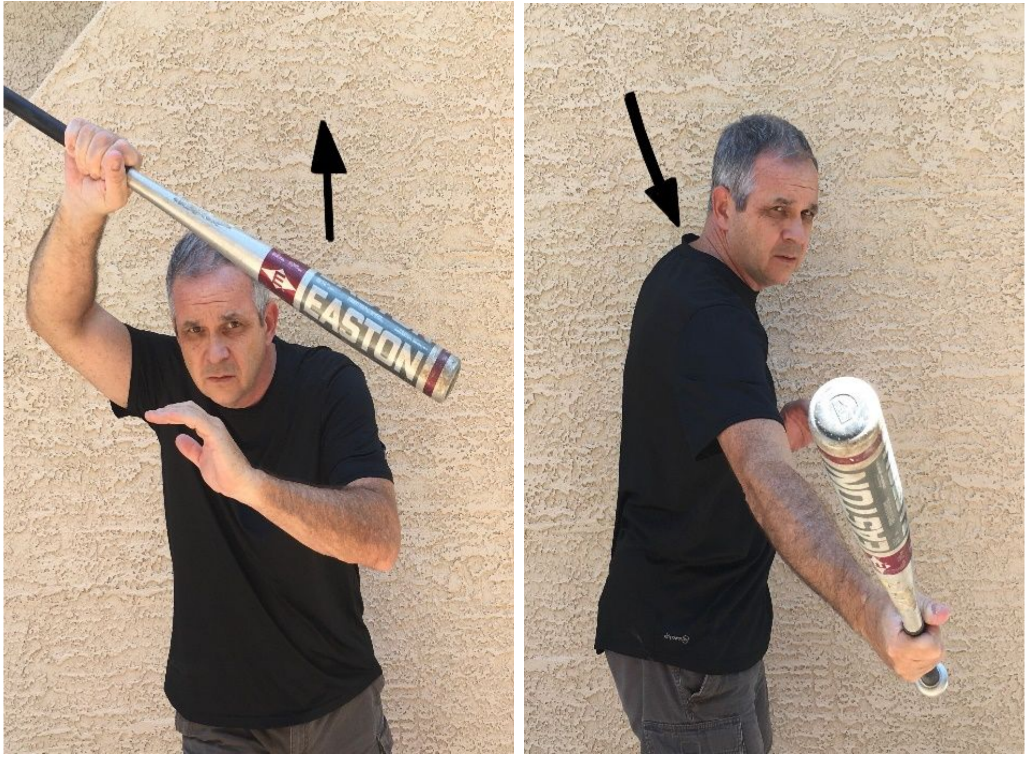






Everyday Objects

Another excellent way to practice the twenty basic movements is with everyday objects. For example, you could do the movements with a broom stick, a tire iron, an umbrella, a rolled-up magazine, or a walking cane. The possibilities are almost limitless. Again, the principles and the movements remain the same. The final example we will discuss in this chapter shows the movements being performed with a baseball bat. In the below photographs the practitioner executes a simple roof cover followed by a downward diagonal strike. At this point I am beating a dead horse, and I am sure that you understand the point. The twenty movements when adapted and built upon, create an endless amount of techniques that can be applied to any type of self-defense situation, weapon, or fighting system. The key is your ability to be flexible, think on your feet, and develop the movements to the point where they are functional.



The Journey Never Ends

Expanding upon the movements and developing your skills is a lifelong journey that never ends. Always be looking for additional ways to practice the movements and improve your abilities with the sword. The following are just a few examples of additional methods of practicing the movements.

1) One weapon/reverse grip
2) Two weapons/reverse grip
3) Two weapons/one reverse grip-one standard grip
4) With all types of footwork
5) On your knees
6) Laying down on the ground
7) In water
8) In the dark
9) On ice or snow

Cutting Patterns

In this final chapter, we will look at cutting patterns that can be used in conjunction with the twenty basic movements we have studied. What are cutting patterns and why are they important to the sword practitioner? The answer is simple. Cutting patterns are the various lines of motion that can be used for both attack and defense. By mastering the cutting patterns, we will explore in this chapter, you will be able to launch an attack along any line from virtually any position. You will also develop the awareness needed to recognize what line an opponent's attack is coming from so you can properly evade or defend against his attack.

There is almost an infinite number of cutting patterns and combinations of these patterns you could use against an opponent. My goal with this chapter is to provide you with a simple roadmap that will enable you to practice cutting along virtually any line and develop the ability to use these patterns instinctively under stress. We will start by breaking down some simple patterns.

Angles of Attack

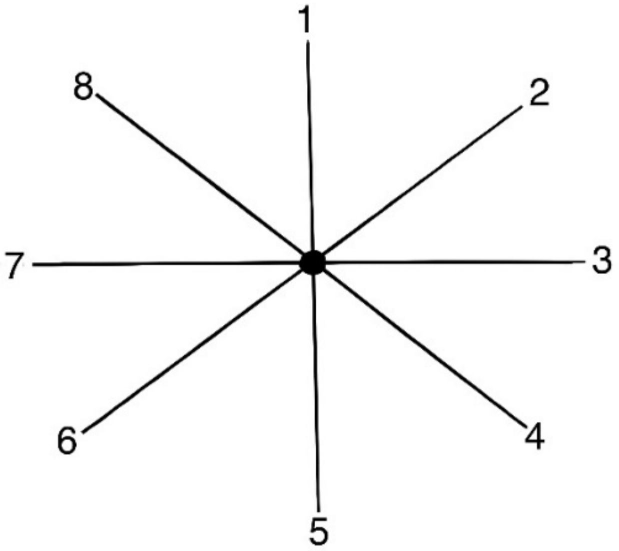
Every system of bladed combat that I ever studied used angles of attack for attacking the opponent and defending against attacks. These range from five simple angles to sixty-four angles depending on the system. Most Filipino martial arts systems use twelve basic angles of attack. I studied several different Filipino systems and each one used a different version of the twelve angles, but ultimately, they all contain the same lines of attack usually performed in different sequences. Instead of listing different angles, we will focus on patterns.

Slash or Thrust

As we study the different patterns, keep in mind that you can slash or thrust along any of the lines. Some patterns lend themselves better to slashes rather than thrusts but usually either can be applied. As a general rule, if the pattern we discuss is circular, you would normally slash. If the pattern is linear, you may slash or thrust. If the pattern is represented by a dot, you will almost always thrust or stab.

The Asterisk

The asterisk is an ancient symbol that is over five thousand years old. Once the sword was developed as a tool for warfare, the asterisk symbol was almost immediately adopted as a method to teach lines of attack and defense. The beauty of the asterisk is that it is a simple pattern of eight lines with a center. A sword fighter should be very familiar with the asterisk because on a basic level it is really all you need to practice attacks and methods of defense. The below diagram shows the asterisk and how each line can be numbered for reference.



An excellent method of using the asterisk is to place the symbol on a wall with tape. Practice cutting along each line and calling out the numbers as you execute an attack. The center of the asterisk diagram is represented with a dot and is also considered a line of attack. You would normally strike to the center with a straight thrust. Keep in mind that you can slash or thrust along any of the lines when you practice.

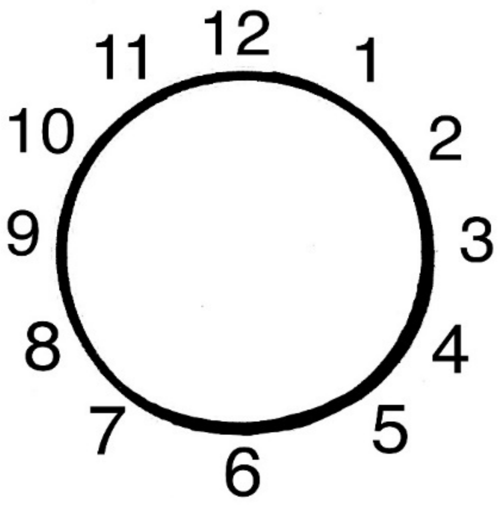
Once you have mastered attacking along the asterisk symbol, get a training partner and have him feed you attacks along each of the lines as you defend. You can use any of the techniques from the twenty basic movements to do this. For example, the V cut travels along lines two and eight. The roof cover defends against line one and the press movement stops an attack on line five.

Eventually, by practicing in this manner, you will gain the ability to quickly defend along any of the nine lines of attack. You will also start to think in terms of defending lines rather than defending against specific techniques. It makes much more sense to have a defensive system that focuses on countering attacks that travel on directional lines instead of trying to memorize a specific technique to counter every possible attack the enemy might make. The asterisk is an excellent pattern for this purpose.

The Clock Pattern

Once you have become proficient with the asterisk, the clock pattern can easily be added. The clock basically adds four additional lines of attack and defense to the pattern. Just like the asterisk, the clock face has been used for centuries in warfare to quickly indicate a direction of movement or the location of the enemy. Fighter pilots routinely use it to communicate the location of targets. By using the clock, you can quickly and easily identify twelve basic angles of attack or defense (thirteen with a thrust to the center). Remember that you can slash or thrust along any of the twelve lines. You can also use circular cuts, whipping of the blade, and butt strokes along all of these lines as well.

The Clock Pattern



Cutting the Alphabet

Something that I was taught early on in my sword training that has proven to be very helpful over the years is the idea of using your sword to cut the letters of the alphabet.

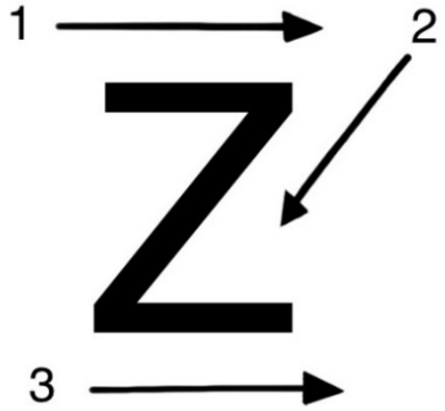
Alphabet Pattern

A, B, C, D…

The general idea here is that you can use your sword to cut the shape of any letter from the alphabet in the air. This concept immediately gives you twenty-six different patterns with millions of combinations. For example, on a basic level you can simply cut the letter A, or the letter B in the air. You can also link letters together to provide various cutting patterns.

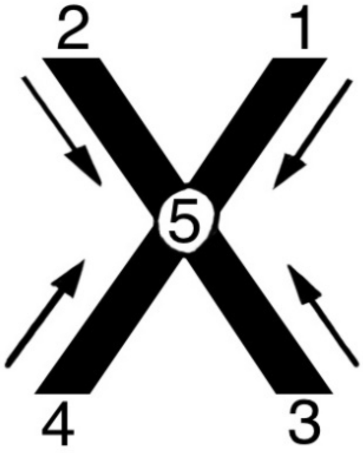
As a simple experiment, pick up your sword and cut your name in the air. By cutting these alphabet patterns in the air, you learn to move your sword in every conceivable formation and use unconventional cutting movements when you are facing an opponent. You probably realize by now that you already used this concept when you performed the V cut in one of our twenty core movements.

You will find that it feels very natural to cut the shapes of some letters while other letters feel a little more awkward. The letter Z is a perfect example of a very natural cutting pattern. Try cutting this pattern with your sword to see how good the motion feels.



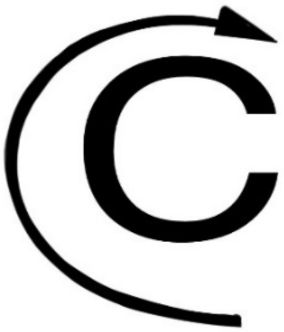
Cutting a Z

Another common alphabet cutting pattern that is used often in sword fighting systems is the letter X. Notice how the letter X can be placed on top of the asterisk to represent lines two, six, eight, and four. The below diagram shows one of the patterns often used to cut the letter X. In this example, you are cutting portions of the letter at a time. Cuts one and two give you the upper portion of the letter X while cuts three and four give you the bottom portions of the letter. A thrust to the center of the letter gives you a fifth line of attack. When I studied Filipino Arnis, this pattern was considered to be the five primary attacks. You might choose to cut the Letter X in two motions instead of four. If you consider that you can use different movements to cut each alphabet letter, it expands the possible patterns at your disposal to an almost infinite number.



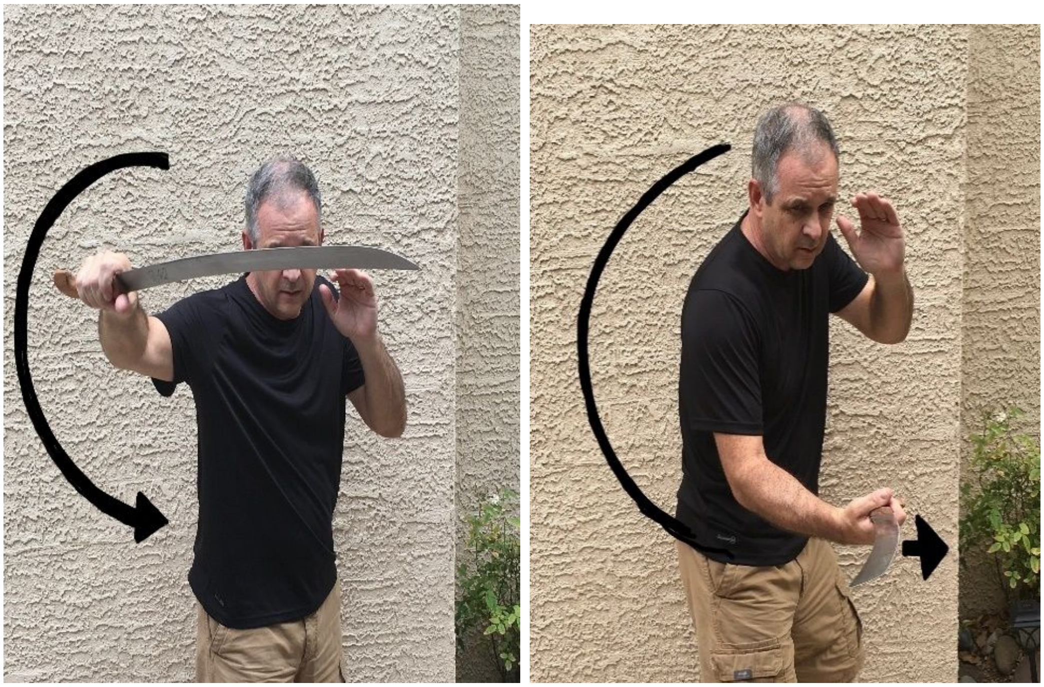
The Five Primary Attacks
(Cutting an X)

As a final example of the alphabet cutting pattern, let's look at the letter C. The letter C can be cut in an arcing motion from top to bottom, or from bottom to top. The below diagram shows the simple pattern.



Cutting a C

In the below photographs the practitioner executes a cut in the form of a letter C with his sword. The cutting pattern can be offensive or defensive in nature. For example, the C cut could used to block a low attack or to cut the opponent's limb as he strikes. It could also be used to defend against a high attack and then attack the lower extremities. The more you practice the patterns, the more you discover new applications for the movements.



By the Numbers

The next logical step in developing your cutting patterns is to use numbers as a template. The concept is exactly the same as cutting the alphabet. Begin by cutting simple single digit numbers in the air. Next expand your practice to double and triple digit numbers. You can randomly cut any number you choose such as your birth date or telephone number. Once again, the patterns become limitless.

By The Numbers Patterns

1, 2, 3, 4, 5…

Symbols and Geometric Shapes

In addition to all of the cutting patterns we have discussed so far, you can also use any symbol or geometrical shape as a template for practicing cuts.

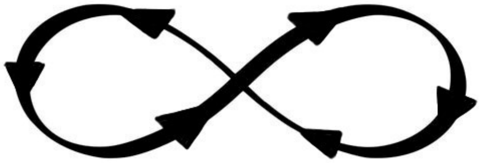
If you have a computer or a cell phone, just look at the keyboard to get an idea of just how many symbols are actually out there. You have circles, squares, triangles, mathematical symbols ,and the money symbol just to name a few. I leave it to you to experiment with any shapes and symbols you choose for your sword training. One very common symbol that you have already used as a cutting pattern is the figure eight or infinity symbol. At advanced stages, experiment with complicated symbols such as religious stars, or the atomic symbol. In ancient times, many of these symbols were thought to be sacred and were used for a variety of combat purposes including footwork, defense, and attack. Below are just a couple of examples of common symbols you can use in your training.

Mathematical Symbols

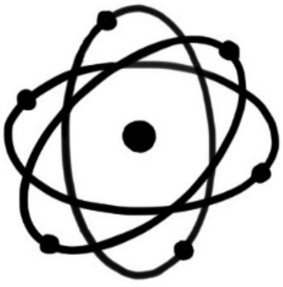
+ - X ÷ =

Symbols

$ & @



Upward Figure-Eight Motion

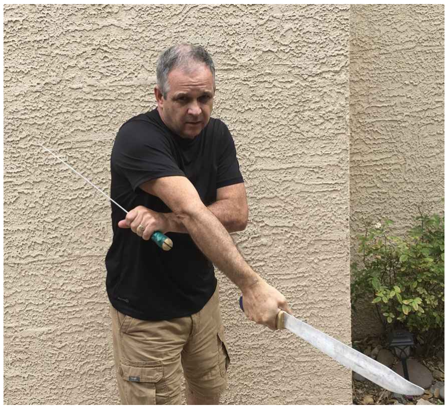


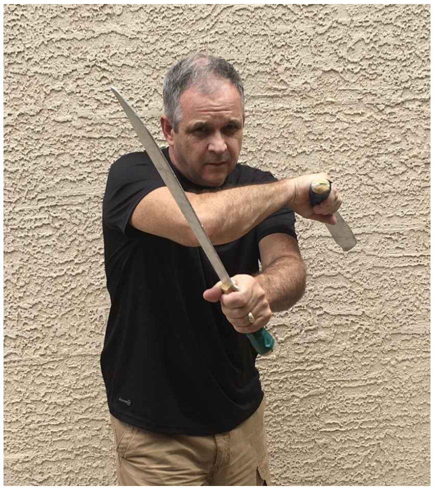
Atomic Symbol

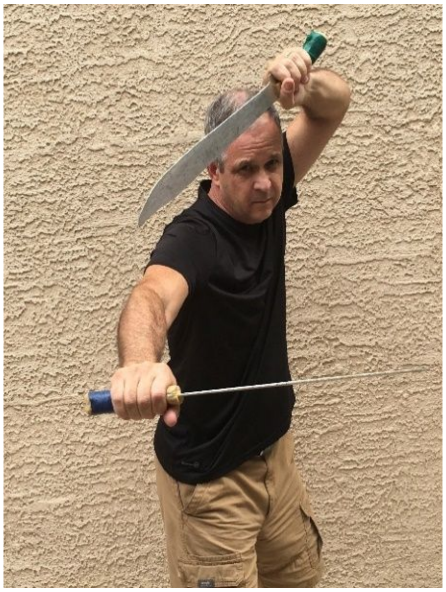
Combinations of Movements and Patterns

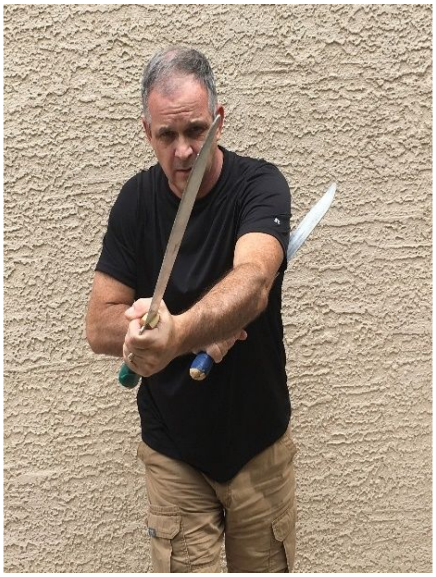
You are now familiar with twenty core sword movements, variations of these movements, and the cutting patterns discussed in this chapter. It is time to combine all of these elements together in your training and create random combinations of attack and defense based on these principles. If you put in the time and effort to become proficient with these concepts, you will be able to freeflow with your sword movements in endless combinations of movements and patterns without conscious thought. Your techniques will then become spontaneous and unpredictable. When you achieve this level of natural flow and freedom with the sword, your training will take on a meditative and spiritual quality.

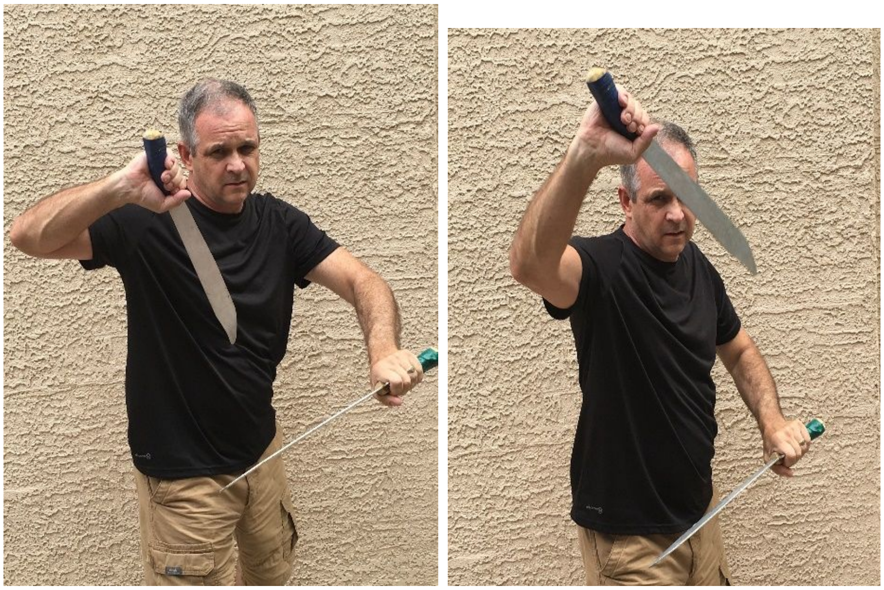
In the below series of photographs, I am using double bolos and freeflowing with the movements and patterns I have shared with you in this book. There was no conscious thought as I performed these movements, I just picked up the swords and started flowing and executing techniques. See if you can identify which movements and patterns I used. It is ironic that through the study of the core movements and patterns, you can actually liberate yourself from the restrictions of specific movements and patterns. Only through constant practice and study will this concept make sense to you.

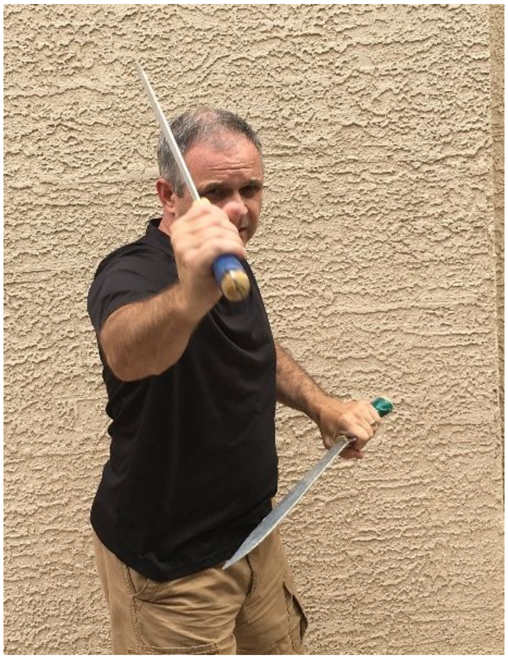


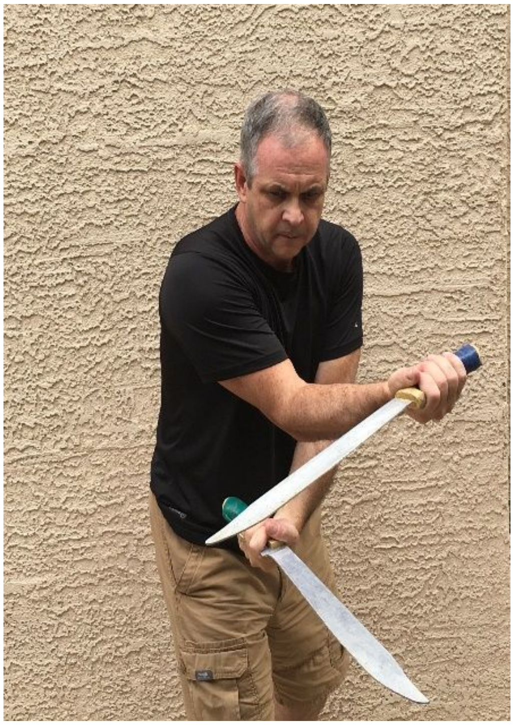


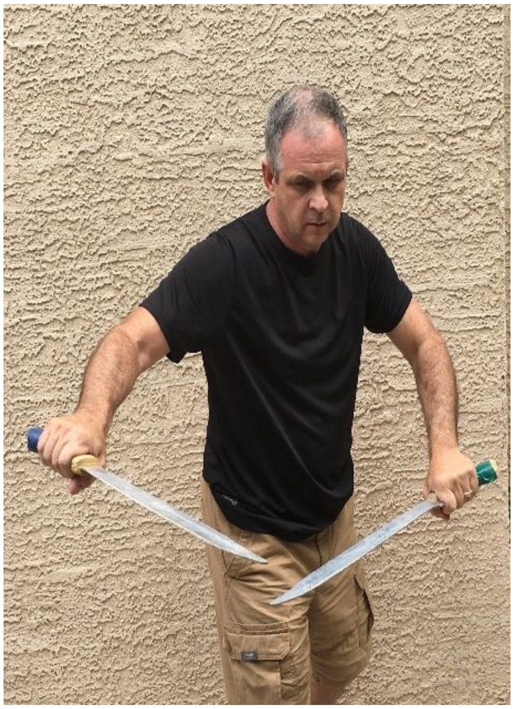


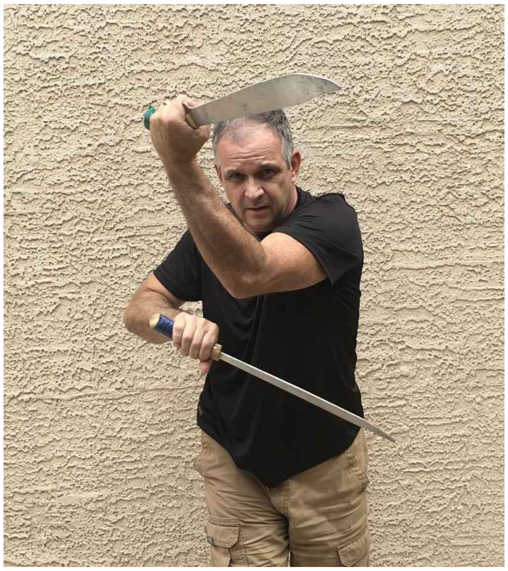












Conclusion

Simply providing someone with woodworking tools will not make them a great carpenter. On the other hand, a great carpenter with no tools at his disposal will have a hard time building anything. The core movements and cutting patterns in this book are simply tools that can be used to enhance your sword fighting skill. It is up to you to take these tools and further develop them. I firmly believe that the movements and patterns I have shared in this book are highly effective and will help you to build a strong foundation. However, you must put in the time and effort in order to utilize these tools. Study of the sword is a lifelong journey with peaks and valleys, but the rewards gained are enormous. I hope you have enjoyed the book.

Chuck Callaway
2021

About the Author

Chuck Callaway is a martial artist with over forty years of experience in the fighting arts. He holds black belts is several systems including, Tang Soo Do, Molum Combat Arts, and Filipino Arnis. He has trained extensively in Jiujitsu, Judo, Kung-Fu, Boxing, Kali, and Tai Chi. Chuck is also a blade enthusiast and has studied various forms of Asian and European sword fighting. In 1987, he met Sifu Vic Butler who taught him the devastating art of elbow boxing, Goshin Budo Jiujitsu, and Molum Combat Arts. After years of intense training, Chuck earned his 3rd degree black belt from Sifu Butler. In addition to his study of traditional martial arts, Chuck received training in hand-to-hand combat and weapons skills while serving as a Security Police Specialist in the military. He was also a certified defensive tactics instructor for law enforcement and has taught martial arts to private students for decades. He continues his lifelong journey of learning and training in the martial arts.